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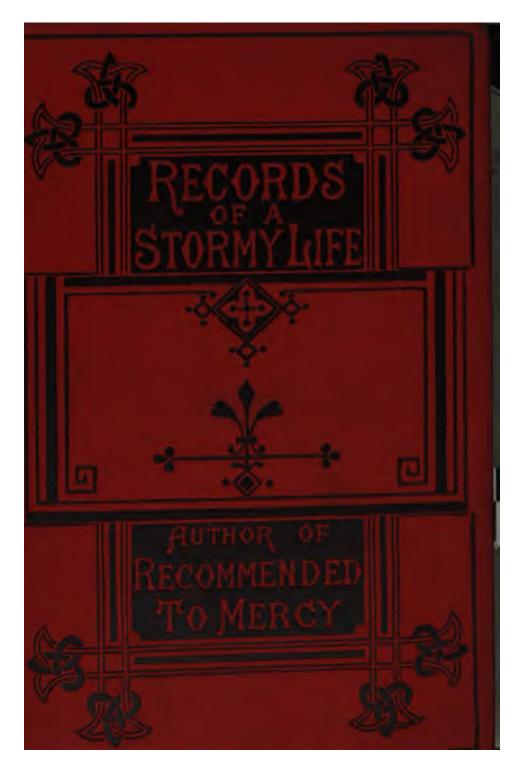
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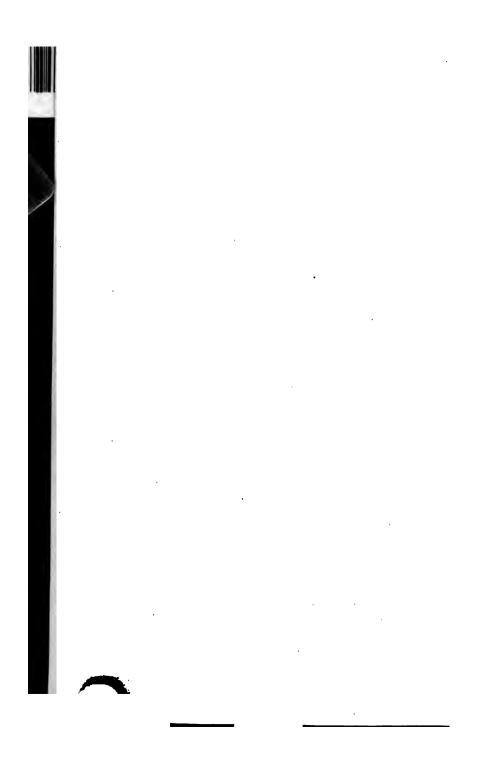
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RECORDS OF A STORMY LIFE.

VOL. II.

No. .

RECORDS OF A STORMY LIFE

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"RECOMMENDED TO MERCY," &c., &c.

" After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
18, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1879.

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251 . f . 232

LONDON: PRINTED BY DUNCAN MACDONALD, BLENHEIM HOUSE.

RECORDS OF A STORMY LIFE.

PART II.

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER V.

"I WILL NOT BE AFRAID."

"COULD you have wished, dear Madge, for a more perfect day? Neither too warm, nor too cold. No blustering wind, and not a chance of rain! It is seldom that fête days have so much to boast of."

It is the month of September, the hour mid-day, and Miss de Beauvoir, who has been for some little while silently wondering at the unusual listlessness of her young vol. II.

relation's manner, has not been able to resist making the suggestive remarks above quoted.

The response to them is far from satisfactory.

"I would much rather that the rain poured down in torrents," said the girl, who is standing before the open window, a far-off gaze in her speaking eyes, and her small hands thrust into the pockets of her gardening apron. "I hate going to Thornlees. It is the beginning for me, I feel, of some dreadful fate." And a shudder, as involuntary as it is painful to behold, momentarily shakes her frame.

Miss de Beauvoir, who, dearly as she loves her god-child, is not always inclined to give in to, what she calls, her nonsense, exclaims loudly against this "piece of folly."

"Absurd! Why, only yesterday, when you and your father returned from that horrid play—with which I sincerely wish

you had never had anything to do—you seemed as if your whole heart was set upon the Archery Fête."

Madge pays no outward heed to this remonstrance; but, as she flings herself, with more impetuosity than her cousin altogether approves of, into a basket-chair, which creaks and strains beneath the girl's tolerably solid weight, her mood again changes, and she says, with a laugh—

"My whole heart, indeed! Why, I have but a fraction left for anybody! Let me see," counting, with extreme gravity, on her dainty finger-tops, "Brian Effingham has a scrap—a very small one, so you need not lift up your eyebrows—Alan Carruthers,"—he rhead a little on one side reflectingly. "No, he is too good; he would not care for anything so—what shall I call it?—unsteady. Then there remains—who? why the dear man in a red coat, with legs as long—as long as the tallest of those ugly old poplars by the

river. I told mother all about him, and she quite approves."

Miss de Beauvoir draws herself up. At all times a joke is to her a serious matter, and when it has for its foundation anything so little comic as Madge's flirtations, and, in addition, that young person's confidential dialogues with her mother, the point of the pleasantry is utterly lost upon her.

"Your revelation must have been rather over-precipitate, it seems to me, seeing that you did not make Colonel Barker's acquaintance till three days ago," Miss de Beauvoir austerely remarks; "but, all things considered, I think," she, a little timidly adds,—"I do, indeed—that you had better perhaps give up going to Thornlees. It is frightfully hot—hotter than it has been any day this year, and driving along those close lanes with your father in the pony-chase would be enough to quite knock you up."

"Really do you think so? Now that is

the only part of the day's outing that I feel certain of enjoying. I am in rude—nay, positively in robust health."

"So you think, my dear; but I know better. There is a restlessness in your manner, a disposition to—to—"

"Chatter! I know what you mean; but," laughing playfully, "you dared not say it! Only fancy! an exception to the rule that 'perfect love casteth out fear.' But, as regards my symptoms, I think they could be much more suggestive of something wrong, if I sat quietly in a corner, and did not so much as say, 'What a good girl am I!"

If Margaret either expected or hoped to have, by her girlish nonsense, brought a smile to her companion's lips, or changed the current of her ideas, she (the speaker) was fated to be disappointed. Miss de Beauvoir declined to be laughed out of her hastily conceived notion that Margaret was "nervous," "over-done," and possibly—

distressing thought!—on the "point of sickening for an illness." That the symptoms she has observed may be traced to over-excitement, and to the absence of late of a regular course of reading, and of walking exercise, Miss de Beauvoir is well persuaded, and she promises herself that in future these evils shall be remedied; but in the meantime there are other and very cogent reasons why the "child" (who is not so strong, her old friend often declares, as she looks) should remain quietly at home.

She is not slow to perceive that Margaret is in one of her most reckless moods—defiant, and yet timorous, lacking the principles which alone are solid ballast. The spirit was willing, but, alas! how weak was the flesh! Small hope indeed did there seem that "Heaven's first law, order," would in the coming ordeal be either to the letter, or in the spirit, respected by Miss Margaret Barham. The

fear under which the anxious spinster most laboured doubtless caused her to see things in their darkest colours, and amongst the number were Madge's clear complexion and expressive blue eyes. This was perhaps unfortunate, since the following remark very naturally gave the wilful girl a legitimate subject for banter.

"You may say what you like, my dear," Miss de Beauvoir had rejoined, "about not being ill, but"—peering closely into the debonnair face in front of her—"I can see plainly enough that your skin is heated, and the whites of your eyes yellow, and—"

"Like poor Fly's, when she was suffering from gastric fever," interrupts Madge, with one of those rippling laughs which, when they break in upon a state of moral gloom, take the spirits, as it were, by storm, and clear the atmosphere, even as the firing off of a cannon disperses dangerous exhalations, and gives freedom to Nature's pent-up breath. "Why, what a

frightful creature I must be! Red as a turkey-cock, and yellow as a guinea! But"—running to a large mirror which stood between the windows, and in her turn taking what is apparently an anxious survey of her features—"I do not quite see the colours you accuse me of. And oh, Cousin Susan "-giving the thin shoulders of her mentor a gentle shake-"I am afraid-I really am-that I have found you out-you, the last person in the world whom I should have suspected of a-aflim-flam! It really is hard upon me! Where am I now to look for a model—an example? Not but that I shall love you even more, now I know what you can-in an emergency-do. You have actually tried to persuade me that I am ill, and must stay at home and eat water-gruel!"

"My dear, how can you talk so wildly? I never said a word about water-gruel."

"No, but you meant it, which is quite as bad. And then to call me biliouslooking! Oh, it is much too cruel! One thing, though, I would have you know, and that is, that even if I am as ill as my poor old dog, drinking basins full of cold water, and at last—oh, don't you remember it?—crawling, poor darling! to the skirt of my dress, that she might die there" (and here the memory of her dead favourite brought to the girl's eyes a tear, which she furtively wiped away). "But what I was going to say is, that, even if I were as near to death as little Fly was, I would still go to Thornlees to-day, and dare everyone present to say that I am afraid."

"You would? Then all I can say is that, however disagreeable and odious might be the consequences of your doing so, you would deserve no pity, for you would have brought them all upon yourself. Knowing that you are determined to have your own way, I will not revert any more to the subject; only as to crying, as you are doing now, about a dog, I must

say that I see no sense whatever in it."

"I do," retorted Madge, speaking (inasmuch as her heart was full) a little huskily—"I do, because she loved me."

"And don't *I* love you, you foolish child?" said Miss de Beauvoir, quickly, for truly she could no more bear to see her Madge in tears than she could look on, an unmoved spectator, at a dog-fight.

Margaret's response to her old friend's query was, of course, a satisfactory one, so that reconciliation speedily followed on the short-lived skirmish; nevertheless the object of so much tender solicitude could not be moved from her purpose. Probably she in some measure deceived herself as to the motive which prompted this adherence to her resolve. She was, in truth, restless and unhappy, and felt that to know the worst—let that worst be what it might—would be preferable to the long, lingering suspense, the uncertainty as to what terms she and society were to be upon, which,

since her meeting with the O'Reillys, had been her portion.

And, whilst Margaret is pondering on these things, her companion is seriously making up her mind to an effort of body, which, to her, is not a little trying. She has been invited, and therefore, with her pride and dignity, can, and will betake herself to Thornlees. With the mantle of her own spotlessness and high position will she defend her child from the "privy nips" and "open flouts" of the envious and the wicked; and this resolve she, with some pride in the self-sacrifice, makes known to Margaret, and receives in return that young person's cordial thanks.

For a second or two she had debated in her mind whether it was wise or kind to allow the prim little spinster to buy, at some cost to her pride, the knowledge that she possessed not the power which the latter hoped to wield; but, on mature deliberation, she resolved to let things be —well persuaded, however, in her own mind, that Miss de Beauvoir would be as inefficient to protect her *protégée* against the "shafts of her enemies" as would be the timid hare (stirred to do battle by her offspring's danger) to defend her little one from the greyhound's greedy fangs!

CHAPTER VI.

MARGARET SUFFERS WRONG.

A MONGST Miss de Beauvoir's most cherished possessions was one which, though a casual observer would probably not have appraised it very highly, she would have starved rather than have lost sight of. This treasure was no other than a certain yellow chariot, pronounced by Miss de Beauvoir as though the letter i were absent in the name, and which bore in its aspect very decided traces of age and decrepitude. Few and far between were the occasions on which old John Harris consented to draw from the coachhouse this time-honoured relic. Probably, seeing that he

was not individually paid for "looking after" Miss de Beauvoir's property, he thought himself justified in allowing the moths to revel undisturbed in the drab cloth lining, and the fowls to roost where it best pleased them, on the exterior of the "old girl's trap." Be this as it may, it is certain that the admiring owner of the vehicle in question was ill-prepared for the deterioration in her well-loved "charrott" which chance one day revealed to her.

When this scion of an ancient race did decide on doing anything out of the common way, that thing was not done by halves. Beneath the dignity of a De Beauvoir was it to make her appearance at Thornlees in the "covered car" that was kept for evening use at Oakden, so a pair of post-horses were ordered from Brassingham, the "charrott" was put into requisition, and, at the time appointed, an elderly "post-boy" drew up before the hall door, in waiting to convey the ladies to the Fête.

An incongruous-looking pair are the two who, clad in their gala dresses, are about to take their places in that singularlybuilt vehicle. From the window, shaded with passion flowers and clematis, of her bed-room, Madge had witnessed the driving up of the wondrous equipage, and had shuddered at the sight. That her dear old relation's appearance will match it well she entertains no re-assuring doubt; but with her own attire, although it is quite simple and unpretentious, she has every reason to be satisfied. A very cloud does she seem, to the admiring old man her father, of azure muslin, as she stands with him at the hall-door, and, with her rosy lips curved into a smile, says to him,

"Do you remember what Dickens's old muffin-woman (the decayed gentlewoman who had once been grand) said to herself on first faintly tinkling her bell?"

"Not I-what was it?" Mr. Barham, in an absent fashion, rejoins.

"'I hope to goodness nobody hears me!"

Mr. Barham laughs inaudibly; not for worlds would he offend the dignity of his wife's aristocratic relation by "poking fun" at the quaint "close carriage" which she so greatly prizes; and had he dared (but, then, for the reason that John Harris's wages are always in arrear, he does not dare) he would many a time have insisted that he, the elderly stableman, should do his duty by Miss de Beauvoir's property. Before responding to Madge's merry anecdote, he looks furtively up the staircase to see if the coast is clear, and then, in an undertone, says,

"And I suppose that you hope nobody will see you in the old "charrott" to-day. Is it not so? Well, only take care that Miss de Beauvoir does not discover you are ashamed of it."

"Oh, that does not the least signify. Cousin Susan is accustomed to my chaff,

and one of these days I mean her to change the old thing for a neat miniature brougham. Ah! here she is! Good-bye, mother, I wish you were coming with us." And, having so said, the girl springs after Miss de Beauvoir into the carriage.

Once installed therein, the old lady, who piques herself on the delicacy of her olfactory nerves, commences, with an ominous movement of the nostrils, to "sniff"—and that audibly—from left to right, and right to left, in quick succession.

"What is the matter, Cousin Susan?" laughs Madge. "Surely you do not object to such a nice old perfume as this? Why, even I can appreciate it. Extrait Rococo-double; is it not?"

"Rococo!" repeats, in intense disgust, the fastidious old spinster. "It is simply horrible! The poultry must have actually lived in the carriage—and the moths! My dear, only look round you at the holes!

One—two—three! Oh, they are in all directions, and the lining is spoilt altogether."

Margaret, thus appealed to, does look, and feels—as is only right and fitting thoroughly ashamed. Miss de Beauvoir pays, if not an extravagant, at least a quite sufficiently liberal sum, for her "entertainment;" and Madge-whose standard of justice and honour is a high one-cannot but admit to herself (reluctantly, as may well be supposed, but then Right is Right, and there is no escaping from a patent truth) that, in this instance at least, their relation has not received her "penny's worth for her penny." It is a case, however, in which she cannot do much more than express her regret that such serious dilapidations should have been permitted on her godmother's property to exist. In her heart she blames her father, but, according to custom, the

weaker vessel bears the *onus*, and John Harris is remorselessly sacrificed at the shrine of filial duty.

It is, perhaps, fortunate that lamentations over the ruined broadcloth, and condemnation of domestic servants generally, should have so occupied the ladies' attention that the thoughts of both were diverted from what had previously been a source of gloomy anticipation—namely, the reception which Madge was likely to meet with at Thornlees. They have turned off from the high-road, and the carriage has even passed through the wide open Lodge gates, before Madge's heart begins to thump nervously against her and she is reminded, by the force of her own tremor, that, if it be true, as the great poet has affirmed, that

"Man to man so oft unjust, is always so to woman," how far more certain a fact it is that women are, if not always "unjust" to their own sex, at least apt to be pitilessly severe in the judgments which they pass upon their fellow-females.

Oakden is four miles from Thornlees. and, as the road thither has lain for the most part through little frequented lanes. it follows that, during the three quarters of an hour which they passed in the little attractive atmosphere of the ill-used carriage, they encountered but few fellow-Once within the Lodge gates. travellers. Madge has ceased to think of the appearance which their antiquated vehicle makes. Her own reception is all that occupies her mind, whilst Miss de Beauvoir's attention is a good deal taken up by the "grounds" through which they are being driven. her youthful as well as middle age, it was through a family "domain" that she had always from Lodge to Castle entrance progressed, so, although quite free from any vulgar wish de se faire valoir by so doing, she cannot resist the desire to bestow a little wholesome criticism on the very inferior (as she deemed them) approaches to Thornlees. Gazing from the open "charrott" window upon big clumps of trees which, crowded against each other, too plainly betray the absence of a practised woodman, and anon on the turf bordering the carriage drive, on which not a few brown leaves, prematurely withered, have fallen, the old maid says, disparagingly,

"So this is Thornlees, of which people talk so much. Humph! At present, at least, I cannot see much to admire; one would imagine that, on an occasion like this, if on no others, they would have had the turf edges clipped, and the leaves swept off; my mother used to say that dead leaves were quite a blessing to poor old people—so much better, you know, than letting them become paupers."

Madge murmurs something to the effect that perhaps the Blairholmes have not much money to spare, but her thoughts are, as we know, elsewhere, and Miss de Beauvoir, for any effect which they produced upon her young companion, might have spared herself the trouble of her remarks.

At last they reach the stately stone portico which adorns the front of the mansion, the steps of the "charrott" come rattling down, and Madge and her chaperon follow the servants into the house—into and through it, for Mrs. Blairholme receives her guests upon the lawn, and, as they proceed on their way, the distant sound of a military band greets their ears.

"Take my arm, Cousin Susan," Madge, as they near the conservatory door, which leads out upon the lawn, says; and Miss de Beauvoir, who sees that the girl is flushed and agitated, complies.

There is a large crowd assembled. The ladies are in a considerable majority, but there are a "good few," as the Scotch

say, of the "nobler" sex, and the Misses Blairholme have no reason to be ashamed of the numbers whom their strenuous efforts at man-capture have brought together.

If anyone had, previous to her departure from home, foretold to Madge that on her approach to that group upon the lawn she would have been thankful for even the moral support afforded by her godmother, she would have laughed the idea to scorn; and now—now that the foe is drawn up (it may be in order of battle) how thankful she feels that she advances not alone to meet them, and that one true, good woman, at least, is near, to stand by and give her the benefit of her countenance.

Can you picture to your mind the pair? A tall, graceful girl, simply and yet fashionably dressed, her air and walk unmistakeably high-bred, but with that in her mien which, to a careful observer, would betray both defiance and depreca-

tion? Leaning on her arm, and wanting some four inches of her height, walks Miss de Beauvoir. A small straw bonnet. plainly trimmed with sarsenet ribbon of the same hue (a bonnet which sets observers wondering whence the wearer thereof could possibly have unearthed so strange a remnant of the past), is tied, with a large bow, under the chin; whilst a muslin dress, scanty in quality, and flounceless. clothes the spare little person, which Madge would fain have persuaded its owner to attire in more befitting fashion. But, in spite of the school-girl-like habiliments so unbefitting to her age and appearance, there is that in the little woman's aspect which stamps her as what she is—namely, a lady every inch of her; and it is hardly possible, seeing that the De Beauvoirs are amongst the acknowledged great ones of the earth, for the near relation of such a one—a girl, too, who had come amongst them, as it were, under the

"absurd-looking old maid's wing," to be openly, whilst protected by that presence, insulted by a "cut" direct.

But, although Margaret's reception by Mrs. Blairholme and her daughters does not quite amount in rudeness to that climax of slight, it approaches nearly enough to the unspoken, "What right have you, and such as you, to show your face here?" to account for the sudden wave of colour which spreads over Madge's usually pallid cheek, and for the defiant raising of her small head, as she moves slowly away from those who so clearly are not her friends.

It is, as I have said, a glorious afternoon. The September sun, giving out much pleasant warmth and power still, throws its rays across the wide, grassy enclosure—an enclosure formed by high banks of magnificent rhododendrons, on which are placed at intervals tents and targets, a noisy band, and a very garden of girls, clad

in Lincoln green, with bows and arrows in To enjoy him or herself, as their hands. the case may be, is apparently the general intention, and if there be some among the motley crew who are striving hard to escape the gnawing of the worm within, and other some who ought, but do not, suffer from the prickings of a reproving conscience, what matters it? No long faces—no sad eyes are there to bring back painful memories to those who have mourned, and have forgotten! Vive la bagatelle is the order of the day, and Margaret Barham, young and charming, though she is, feeling herself out of place in the midst of the giddy throng (some of whom have plainly shown that they will have none of her), leads her chaperon away towards a side walk which is screened from view by the masses of evergreens with which the spot abounds.

"How pretty it all is! Quite like fairyground," Miss de Beauvoir, anxious to break rather a prolonged silence, and making use of the first words which come into her rather bewildered head, says; but Madge, not at all to her surprise, makes no reply in kind. Instead, it is with a passionate allusion to the scene she has just gone through that she responds.

"Did I not tell you how it would be? The cowards! Numbers against one! And all against a helpless girl! If I had a husband—if—" and the memory of Brian Effingham—Brian, with his knightly fearlessness, his utter contempt for the world's opinion, and his love—such love as he has to bestow—for herself, flashes across her mind—"if I had anyone to defend me, they would not dare—I know they would not—to treat me so."

And Madge, regardless of Cousin Susan's words of attempted consolation, falls to thinking regretfully of her folly (as she mentally terms it) in rejecting proposals which, had she acted otherwise, would

have been potential in saving her from the mortifications which she is now enduring. Thoroughly apparent has it now become to her that a woman who acts, be it only in the very slightest degree, in defiance of the world's opinion, cannot venture to stand against that world's opinion—alone!

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE "NICK OF TIME."

MISS DE BEAUVOIR does not altogether share in Madge's conviction that to lower and insult that young person is a parti pris amongst the influential ladies who are assembled at Thornlees. To altogether retire from the battle-ground is, she thinks, an ignominious act; her own "blue blood"—to say nothing of twelve lustres of unblemished virgin life—arises within her as an argument against "surrender," and therefore, she, though not without some misgivings as to the wisdom of the step, tempts her companion again into the "haunts of women."

Since their retreat into the background. there has been an arrival, and that one of importance, at considerable Thornlees. The Countess of Tadcaster has put in an appearance, in consequence of which event there is scarcely a woman in the assemblage whose enjoyment of the present is not more or less marred. For Envy and Jealousy, together with a vulgar ambition to be the first, and an equally under-bred fear of being the last, have taken possession of almost every female bosom in that much-got-up and well-to-do-looking company. Before, there had been for many the prospect of spending a pleasant, if not a profitable, afternoon, but the advent of the great lady has "changed all that." So true it is that, in this strange world of ours, le mieux est l'ennemi du bien.

If it were in the power of smiles alone to purchase popularity, who would be so rich in the possession of that highly-valued, yet fleeting gift as the large, fair, determined-looking wife of the Lord-Lieutenant, whose unexpected apparition at the Archery Fête has produced fully the amount of sensation which she had desired and expected? There are but a favoured few with whom, lavish though she usually is of smiles and cordial finger-pressings, Lady Tadcaster, as the Lord-Lieutenant's "lady," deemed it not infra dig. to shake hands; and to these she-with an imitation of Majesty which she flattered herself was thoroughly effective—displayed a travestied cordiality by which no one present was deceived. For Lady Tadcaster's smiles ("hyena-like," the many enemies which her undoubted insolence had raised for her called them) were proverbial, and even those who courted her notice, and grovelled at her feet for the mere chance of being beamed upon by the large white teeth which her ladyship so loved to display, would have travelled many a weary mile barefooted, were the hope theirs of seeing, at their journey's end, the tyrant who had lessened their own selfrespect so remorselessly, enduring, in her turn, mortification, and shedding, maybe,

"Tears that fell, alone and uncheckt,
Without relief, and without respect,
Like the fabled pearls that the pigs neglect,
When pigs have that opportunity.
For, of all the griefs that mortals share,
The one that seems the hardest to bear
Is the grief without community."

In the meantime, nothing in the whole catalogue of human events being less likely to occur than an instance of retributive justice so well-deserved as the above poetically described one, Lady Tadcaster, with her "party"—an Irish Marquis and an Eastern Counties Duchess—continues her smiling progress amongst the members of the social gathering, in search (but this purpose is known only to herself) of the audacious girl whose independence of spirit had caused her to be the Countess's bête noire, but whose turn it is—if the great lady should have her will—to know what torture

public humiliation has the power to inflict.

Although Miss Barham and Lady Tadcaster have never (in the common acceptance of the term) "met," the latter has need of no friendly (?) hand to point out to her the object of her quest. More than once when, in a magnificent char-à-bancs, drawn by four high-stepping cobs, she has-accompanied by some of the Tadlands guestsbeen driven to see the S. F. M. fox-hounds throw off, have her angry eyes lighted upon the "well-known" Madge Barham, who, mounted upon "Canny Kate," and looking-as, indeed, she doubtless felt-the happiest of the happy, was surrounded by red-coated men, and had all the appearance -to borrow the phrase of a sporting individual who formed one of the Tadlands party-of "going" as long and as far as her horse would carry her.

A look, not bold, but entirely fearless the fearlessness of youth and innocence had met Lady Tadcaster's cold, disdainful

one, when, the break having drawn up at the covert's side, Canny Kate's glossy quarters found themselves in rather alarming proximity to the hind wheel of the imposing-looking vehicle. Being the later arrival on the ground, the equipage of the Lord-Lieutenant would (or rather ought), in case of accident to the bonny bay or her rider, to be held responsible for the mischief. Of this fact Madge was well aware, and consequently, when the mare began to plunge and fidget under her restraining hand, a look of proud defiance shot from her large blue eyes, and a smile, that was considered by Lady Tadcaster to be intensely impertinent, curled her lip. girl's nature is pugnacious, and she would fain have carried on the unequal war, but a friend-Alan Carruthers to wit-having whispered in her ear a word or two of prudent counsel, the sunny smiles returned, and Canny Kate, obeying a slight touch of the coral-mounted whip, moved from the

near neighbourhood of the foe. Not, however, out of sight of the enemy, and certainly not before Lady Tadcaster had scored another mark, and that a black one, against the insignificant "nobody" who had dared even to look defiance at one so immeasurably and incontestibly her superior.

That score was paid off in full when Margaret, with her arm still within that of her frail-looking little chaperon, emerged from the shelter of a tuft of rhododendrons, and came full upon the merciless woman whose face, radiant with the blandest courtesy, was turned in the direction whence her unsuspecting victim came. But in a moment—in less, if possible, than the twinkling of an eye—a change came over the countenance on which so many eyes were turned. A frown—severe as the cruelest of those with which the Virgin Queen was wont to freeze her victims into stone—was summoned to the

brow which Margaret, pale and frightened, found herself forced—for there was no turning back, nor any possibility of escape—to confront. It was only a look; but looks, if charged heavily enough with the deadly ammunition of hatred and contempt, can as surely kill as can the wickedest and most calumnious words that ever broke from woman's lips!

Verily, at that moment, when the iron of deepest mortification entered into her soul, and no faintest power of resistance seemed left to her, Madge sorely realized the utter futility of her boast that, "as long as conscience condemned her not, she would not fear what men" (or even women, which was saying infinitely more) "could do unto her." Sick at heart, although with a brave attempt to smile as she addressed a playful remark to her scarcely less hurt and indignant companion, she, with a step which she vainly endeavoured to make dignified, threaded the mazes of the crowd;

the crowd, in which it seemed to her that every friendly face had departed, leaving her desolate and alone!

I have often, for the credit of "the sex," hoped that in torturing (as such women as Lady Tadcaster are given to do) the hearts of their victims, they acted in ignorance of the misery which they were causing. I have tried to believe that no love of power (that most coveted of possessions by the weak female mind) has had a share in inducing them to—in the presence of others—treat an erring, but, perhaps, not wholly guilty sister, as though she were a castaway. have tried (I say), but I have failed. With a saddened heart have I noted the zest, the interest, the-I might almost say-pleasure with which even kind-hearted women listen to tales of wrong-doing of which some other woman is the heroine; whereas, if the theme be one in which there figures a pure and blameless daughter of Eve, a devoted mother, a model wife, the

audience will (unless the subject of discourse chances to be a Royal princess) be apt to grow speedily tired of the topic, and in a hurry to change it for a livelier theme.

Glancing—which she almost every moment did-at Margaret's flushed cheeks and agitated manner, Miss de Beauvoir felt very keenly for the high-spirited girl to whom had been done this unmerited dishonour: but, whilst compassionating her, she also indulged in some pity for Some pity, and not a little anger; herself. for who were they? who, in fact, was Lady Tadcaster, that either they, or she, should —in the person of her young cousin—venture to insult a scion of the great De Beauvoir house? Sorely did she now regret the imprudence of which, in venturing into such society, she had been guilty; andin the bitterness of her spirit-something of this regret was implied when, speaking to the indignant girl beside her, she said,

"I think, my dear, that it was almost a pity we came at all; you see, ladies alone, as we are, can do nothing towards taking their own parts, and, in my opinion, the sooner we go home the better."

But to this suggestion Margaret very decidedly demurred; she was possessed by a restless, as well as by a very angry spirit, and the notion of home quiet with this miserable weight upon her heart (to say nothing of a very un-Christian-like cry for vengeance which was making itself plainly heard within her breast) was one from which her very soul recoiled. on the point—somewhat testily, it must be owned, for she is in no mood to endure patiently any further aggravation-to explain in some sort her feelings on the subject, when a well-known face and figure, those of no less welcome a personage than Alan Carruthers, appears in sight.

"Oh, how glad I am—how very, very

glad!" exclaimed Margaret, as she offered her pretty, ungloved hand to his cordial grasp. "And now, dear Cousin," she added, brightly, "I shall be afraid of nothing."

CHAPTER VIII.

A MAUVAIS QUART D'HEURE.

"OH, Cousin Susan, there is no need for us to go now," Madge joyfully exclaims; "Mr. Carruthers will see us through it. You will, won't you?" she, eagerly addressing him, exclaims; and at the same time, Miss de Beauvoir having politely refused his offered arm, it is taken unceremoniously by her godchild; the action, although it makes his heart beat wildly against his breast, changes in no sort the expression either of his voice or countenance. These he has thoroughly at his command, as he replies,

"I am immensely flattered, of course, by

this effusion of gladness, and now only wait to know what it is that I am supposed to be so thoroughly able to do—no miracle, I hope, for I should be sorry to fall away in your good opinion."

Margaret colours somewhat vividly ere she replies, for Alan's question is a puzzling one—puzzling because, in truth, what can he do? and so she merely says irrelevantly, and not without hesitation,

"We are here alone, and—we have been put upon; the weak so often are, you know. Think of the sick birds!" and with a little nervous laugh she glances kindly up at his true, thoughtful face.

"Well, but," pursues Alan, "all this seems so unaccountable; you were going home—a natural thing, if you were not comfortable here, to do—but, the moment that I put in an appearance, even the desire to leave this scene of festivity seems at an end. You cannot—I hope so, at least—have been very sorely 'put upon;' any way,

may I hope "—smiling into her bonny face
—"that you will let me into your secret?
I should be glad to know the meaning of this mystery."

"There isn't any mystery—not one bit," falters Madge—" at least "—correcting herself—" people might suspect some, only—we—I—ah! I must begin from the very beginning, and when you know all—every single thing, as Cousin Susan does, I feel sure that you at least will not misjudge me."

The rosy flush which the joy of seeing her true friend had called up to the girl's cheeks has now subsided, and she is once more the rare pale Margaret who, in Alan Carruthers' eyes, has always seemed so well-nigh divinely pure a pearl. Involuntarily he presses nearer to his side the hand that rests upon his arm, while he says, with a softness that is born of his deep love,

"You only do me justice. It would

indeed be no heart of flesh that could think harshly of you. But "—suddenly turning to the prim little figure on his right—an especially prim figure at the moment, for Miss de Beauvoir has stiffened herself, since the colloquy began, into a display of extra dignity—"playing second fiddle" is no more agreeable to her than it is to her neighbours—"but what," continues Alan, "does Miss de Beauvoir think of all this? If she approves of me as father-confessor, we will sit upon this mossy seat, and talk where none can hear."

Whereupon the trio seat themselves on a fallen tree, and Margaret tells, from first to last, her tale. She is glad, albeit he will surely blame her, to confide in him, but she is hardly prepared for the burst of anger which follows on her account of Brian Effingham's proceedings.

"He should never" (and here two words, indicative of strong passion, are with difficulty suppressed) "have forgotten himself

so far as to visit you whilst you were—it may almost be said—alone. Do you think that I—that any man of honour would have done so? Was it not wholly, inexcusably selfish on his part to have acted in such a manner?"

He pauses, in the hope of receiving an affirmative response to his exordium: but-Margaret, moral coward that she is, dares not, without reservation, satisfy him. Only by becoming Brian Effingham's wife can the hope of being again an honoured and respected member of society be opened out to her. It is true that the opportunity of recovering that envied position may never again be hers. lover may not choose to run the risk of being again refused, but then, on the other hand, he may "be constant still," therefore to join Alan Carruthers in entirely condemning him is a course which she does not feel inclined to take. Her evident hesitation, and the "hanging back" on her

part from any distinct acquiescence in his opinion, are very displeasing to him, and it is his firm conviction that Margaret's unwillingness to cast blame upon Colonel Effingham is a proof that her love is given to the least likely man in England to make her happy. Jealousy is too apt, especially when it assails a man of fiery passions (long restrained, but smouldering inwardly), to make him both suspicious and purblind. In this case Alan Carruthers proved himself to be, with all his cunning, shortsighted, and wide of the mark indeed.

He takes a few moments to recover his equanimity, and then, abandoning any further allusion to "the ruffian," says,

"And so you and Miss de Beauvoir were really about to beat a retreat? Unwise, I think, on your part. Women are like bullying schoolboys; they will worry those who seem to mind their spiteful play, but turn upon them boldly, and they cease their cruel game."

"I know it—I told Cousin Susan so," Madge eagerly rejoins; "but still I had not courage to face those cold, hard women again. To be thought—ah! but I know not what they thought, only it must have been something very bad, or they surely would not have deemed it necessary" (and here a smile which contained in it a decided element of bitterness curved her lip) "to send poor, unobtrusive me so very unmistakeably to Coventry."

As she, in weary, faltering accents (for the smile has been first cousin to a tear), utters these last unpleasing words, a flush of intensest anger darkens Alan's sallow cheek. Ardently does he long to visit upon the real culprit the sins of which he has been guilty; for, utterly without excuse, in his opinion, is the act which has brought upon this impulsive girl such unmerited retribution. But—he asks himself—what shadow of right has he (to say nothing of his lack of power to aid) to interfere in her

behalf? No relative is he of the oppressed one's. He cannot claim Miss Barham as his affianced bride, and say to those who libel her, "Would she be that, did I not believe her to be pure as unsunned snow?"

But even were such championship to be possible, a man's advocacy of a young and attractive woman can rarely, and under any circumstances, be advantageous to her reputation; and, moreover, even though the whole truth regarding poor Madge's good Samaritan-like escapade were to be made public, is it certain that the revelation would in any degree benefit her? Facts are stubborn things, and to render the one by which Miss Barham had been condemned nugatory would have been simply impossible. Nothing short of a wellproved alias—nothing short, that is to say, of a miracle—could rehabilitate this girl in the opinion of society. Yes,—and a pang bitter and sharp as a surgeon's relentless probe, shot through Alan's heart,

—there existed one alternative. An alternative which, however, was, in his opinion, worse—as a remedy—than the disease itself. Margaret might (he believed it to be in her power to do so) marry Effingham, and then—

A voice—the voice of the girl on whose future his thoughts are intent—breaks in upon his reverie. It has rather a plaintive and self-pitying sound, one which, somehow, reminds Mr. Carruthers that its owner is too young to fight, as yet, the battle of life bravely. The words, besides, to which he listens, are suggestive of a lack of mental muscle that bodes ill for the speaker's power to—any time—protect herself.

"After all, what does it matter?" Margaret—her tears into their briny bed having been sent back—continues: "I shall only be a nine days' wonder! Come, Mr. Carruthers. No one will be rude to us when we are no longer unprotected

females, and it will be so much pleasanter under the trees than it is here."

The only reply which Alan makes to this suggestion is a silently acquiescent With an effort he shakes himself one. free from his unruly thoughts, and follows the ladies—who have risen—from the summer-house; but—an additional proof, if one were wanting, that men, taking them generally, are less at home in "awkward situations," and are more deficient in the art of seeming what they are not than is the sex which is called the "weaker" one—Alan Carruthers showed less than no inclination to venture with his two companions far into the "enemy's country." For a short while they lingered in the outskirts, an occasional "straggler" (one, perhaps, who, like themselves, could hardly be accused of enjoying, with too strong a zest, the mild excitement of the meeting) would say a few words to them in passing -the fineness of the weather, and the

"charmingness" of the party, being, as usual, the staple of the remarks made; but, after a short time, the sense of isolation, together with one of correlative restraint, which had gradually crept over the disintegrated triad, rendered the longer stay at Thornlees, to two, at least, of the party, anything but agreeable.

Madge is the first to make a suggestion in favour of departure.

"You have been wonderfully good to us, Mr. Carruthers," she says, suddenly. "It is not every man who would care to march two forlorn women about in the way that you have done; but your trouble shall have an end now—shall it not, Cousin Susan? We will ask Mr. Carruthers to see if your carriage has come for us. He can't mistake it, you know,"—with a gleam of the old gay spirit in her smiling mouth and eyes—"very high, and unshiny; with old Job Tarrant, from the Queen's Arms, on a stiff white horse in front of it."

Miss de Beauvoir's serious countenance is scarcely brightened by this description of her property, but Alan, on the contrary, laughs as he says, "All right!" and walks away to perform the task required of him.

"How good-natured he is!" remarks Madge, as they wait his return in the place where he has left them. It is close to the lawn entrance of the great conservatory, and within it women's high-pitched voices are plainly heard.

Neither Cousin Susan nor her companion has the faintest inclination to listen, but, before they are reminded that to move farther away is likely to be expedient, the following words have been caught by, and fairly scathed their ears.

"There was a report that Mr. Carruthers thought of marrying her, but, in spite of his having been with her to-day, I can't believe such a thing to be possible. After what we all know, what man in his senses would wish her to be his wife?"

Mr. Carruthers is not long absent, but when—with the intelligence that Miss de Beauvoir's carriage is to the fore—he returns to his post, he finds that the two ladies have retreated rather inconveniently far from observation, and that on the countenances of both there are added signs of agitation and discomfiture. Both, however, are silent as to the causes of the increased pallor of the one, and the fevered hue which has settled on the other's face. Cousin Susan feels thoroughly ashamed of the colour which anger, on her child's account, has summoned to her cheek; but Margaret's sole sensation is a longing to leave the scene where she has suffered torture, and to endure the memory thereof—as best she can—alone.

CHAPTER IX.

MADGE MAKES UP HER MIND.

as far as possible from her mother's knowledge any annoyances or trials which she herself is called upon to bear. Well she knows how entirely her own will Mrs. Barham make the griefs which she is powerless to remedy. The sedentary life that she is in part condemned by ill-health to lead, is favourable to the fretting over and magnifying the troubles that to her sympathising bosom have been confided. Then "balmy sleep" forsakes her, and the doctor, who is impotent to minister to a

mind diseased, is sent for, in all haste, to give the sufferer ease.

Not a word has this tender, but not exactly and at all times judicious, mother been told of the great and perplexing trouble which Madge's imprudence had entailed upon her. The girl who is (her heart prompting the deceit) a good dissembler, has never lacked a smile, when one was needed, for the quiet, stay-at-home woman whose sole vocation seemed, to ordinary observers, to be that of ordering dinners and casting up the weekly bills. The difficulty which she finds in making both ends meet is never by her, even to Madge, complained of; as a true woman and a loyal wife, she suffers and is still.

During the drive home, the two depressed women are almost wholly silent; Miss de Beauvoir professes to dislike talking in a carriage, and possibly is fully as willing as is her companion to abstain from alluding to their past discomfiture. It is not till they stop at the low iron gate which guards the entrance to Oakden that Margaret says, hastily,

"Please, dear Cousin Susin, say no word to mother of this miserable business; it would break her heart, and do no good to me."

Miss de Beauvoir draws up her head stiffly, whilst her fingers, in their ill-fitting cheap gloves (she is a miser, as regards small things, especially quoad those with which she only has to do), are trembling visibly; her jealousy of Madge's mother is one great embitterer of her life, and her envy of the joys and honours of matronhood go hand in hand with that baneful feeling. maidenism, per se, would have had (but for the necessary sequence of childlessness) no terrors for her. To be the mother of a living being, whether that being were son or daughter, had always seemed to her the highest bliss which God can give; and now—now that there existed one—sweet Margaret to wit—on whom the lonely-hearted spinster had learned to lavish the pent-up treasures of her heart, she grudged, with a bitter and un-Christian acrimony, the deep love which Madge unobtrusively lavished on her mother.

The carriage had stopped, and Miss de Beauvoir stepped with dignity from the desecrated vehicle (on the panels of which her family "arms," in faded glory, but still resplendent, figured) before she replied to Margaret's request.

"It was quite unnecessary, my dear," she said, "to warn me on such a subject; your mother and I have not many interests in common, and certainly your conduct is not a topic on which I am likely to descant with her."

And having so said, the old lady, who piques herself on "never owing a shilling," commences the, to her, all-important duty of "paying the post-boy." The old-

fashioned netted purse is in her hand, but, even whilst making her simple calculations, her thoughts are all of Madge; she would have deemed it wrong, in the girl's hearing, to throw blame on Mrs. Barham for her neglect of the child's principles, but in her heart of hearts there was joy in the thought that, owing to that neglect, the "forming" of her treasure's mind had fallen to her share, and that (with the exception, of course, of having brought Margaret into the world) dull, commonplace Mrs. Barham had nothing whatever to do with her.

"Well, dear, have you had a good time, as the Americans say?" asks the stay-at-home Hausfrau, as her tall girl stoops to kiss her cheek. "You are early back. Was Cousin Susan tired? Oh, I forgot; there are two letters for you in your room, and one of them," lowering her voice to a whisper, "looks, I am afraid, very like a bill."

"Poor mother!" is Madge's remark to herself, as, with a step very different from her usual light and youthful one, she wends her way upstairs. "Her thoughts are always running upon bills. I fear she has them on the brain. If I were inclined to be extravagant, the constant sight of her perpetual trials, her never-ending warring with the difficulties which living beyond one's income entails, would surely cure me! Thank God! I do not owe a shilling in the world."

She is in her own little morning-room by this time—the room which is as prettily bright with tasteful adornments as her own delicate fancy and Cousin Susan's money aid have been able to render it. On a table strewn with books, and other evidences of a woman's accustomed presence, lie the two letters of which Mrs. Barham has spoken. At sight of one of them her heart seems to stand still, for it needs no conjurer to tell her that it is from Brian Effingham,

and although none but he can, in her present trouble, be to her as a tower of strength, and a refuge from the tempest, yet the having recourse to him as a protector and a rescuer sends a cold chill through her veins, and deprives her for a passing moment of the power to open his letter.

Only for a moment, Margaret's "quick spirit" resists suspense, and with almost passionate haste she tears open the wellsealed envelope.

And it is as she expected. Brian will not give her up. Opposition to his will and pleasure has worked upon him its accustomed baleful effect, and it is scarcely too much to aver that, in order to secure the object of his wishes, neither fire nor water would be of avail to prevent an attempt, at least, on his part to gain his ends. And yet—a truth which Margaret, pure of heart and of knowledge though she is, instinctively recognises—his love for

her is a feeling which hardly deserves the name. A violent and solely material passion is it, and, although she would be incapable of analyzing the matter, she realises the truth that he will hold her—

When his passion shall have spent its novel force, As less worthy than his dog, and a good deal cheaper than his horse.

"How can I bear it?" is the question which she asks herself, as her imagination pictures to her long years of close companionship with one whose "grosser nature" than her own (although it may fail to "weigh her down") will nevertheless be to her a never-failing source of trial. "Why-oh! why," she asks herself, "did the idea of marrying me, or, indeed, any girl, enter his head? His wild, ungoverned character utterly unfits him (I feel convinced it does) for home affections, and for the routine of husband and wife existence. As somebody once said, he was intended by nature to be a Pirate. His fearless.

reckless temperament might, a century and a half ago, and whilst

'Moving the monarch of a peopled deck,'
have proved invaluable; but of what
benefit can it, in the nineteenth century,
be to me? Of what but to render me a
miserable, because an utterly incongruously mated woman?"

It is thus that Madge, during a long and troubled hour, holds converse with herself. She does full justice to the good, and even noble, mental gifts of the man whose renewed proposal to make her his wife she must now definitely respond to. He is high-minded, honourable, generous, and endowed with not a few intellectual gifts; but of tenderness, and almost even of pity, she believes him to be incapable. The need of sympathy is one which he can never feel—

"From all affection, as from all contempt," he could, she feels convinced, to the end of his being, live exempt, and severed.

And what, contrasted with this sketch of character, is she? Scarcely inferior to himself in generosity and intelligence, she is, to the tips of her fingers, a moral coward; while to be dearly loved, to be gently dealt with and duly appreciated, are absolute essentials to her happiness. And well does Margaret know that so it Like a tender leaf just opened for its brief summer life, and which shrivels up and perishes when the east wind blows too fiercely on it, so will her heart wither and wax dead beneath the chilling influence of a husband who loves her not. But there is yet another view of the question which she feels bound to consider—yet another question which she severely puts to herself. Does she, in her turn, love the man with whom she has so nearly made up her mind to stand at God's altar, and pronounce there solemn and irrevocable yows? The answer is quick in coming. She does not love Colonel Effingham as she would wish to love her accepted husband, but, on the other hand, she likes and in many respects admires him; moreover, she feels well assured that if he will only be good to her, only allow her the satisfaction of knowing that she is necessary to his happiness, she will love him with a faithful and true heart; and even though his will should be despotic law, and the power to which she is content to bow be not always prudently wielded, her obedience will still be given.

It must not be supposed that, in her arguments for and against her acceptance of Brian Effingham's offer of marriage, the fact that the announcement of her engagement to him would, if not entirely, at least in a great degree, restore her to her former footing in public estimation, went for nothing. On the contrary, the most cogent argument which her reason brought to bear upon the subject was this important fact—so cogent indeed was it that, before the dressing-bell sounded, her mind was

made up, her short letter of acceptance written, and the very words in which (after it was too late to recall the missive) she would disclose her afternoon's work to Miss de Beauvoir, determined upon.

It was characteristic of Madge that she decided for herself, resolving, as she did so, that none should share in the responsibility which she incurred. Miss de Beauvoir, a nervous self-tormentor, might become, should she have been induced to throw the weight of her influence into either scale, one of the most miserable of women. There are not many of her sex who, even if satisfied that they have acted for the best, can endure, without painful thought, the idea of having been the unwitting cause of unhappiness to another. And for this cause it was that Margaret kept-till it was too late to change it—her resolution to herself.

CHAPTER X.

HASTE TO THE WEDDING.

N the short period, barely two months, which, between the despatch of Margaret's important "Yes" and the still more irrevocable "I will" which she pronounced in the Chancel of Telhurst Church, elapsed, it is not necessary to dwell. The season of Courtship, usually to betrothed maidens one of almost unalloyed happiness, was far from being so to Margaret Barham. pre-conceived judgment of her lover was confirmed rather than lessened by habits of greater intimacy, and by the familiarity which "engagement" authorises. Had the question been solemnly put to her"In what is your intended husband wanting, and what are the shortcomings of which you complain?" she would have found it very hard to answer. Brian was very attentive—too attentive indeed. Madge sometimes thought, and he was evidently, in "a sort of way," fond of her. He brought her pretty presents, and very often, in some instances indeed when, from peculiar circumstances, the doing so greatly distressed his fiancée, he endeavoured to place his arm surreptitiously round her waist; but he was utterly devoid of what the French call sentiment, the meaning of which is as different from our word sentiment as day is from night; poetry he cared nothing for, music but little, whilst so totally unsympathetic was his own nature that the gentle tenderness of another would upon him have been utterly thrown away.

There were moments when Madge bitterly felt that her wealth of young affec-

tions, and all her fresh maiden store of love, would be cruelly wasted on one who was so incapable of appreciating them; and more than once, when the conviction that so it was had been painfully forced upon her, she had half resolved to free herself. before it became too late, from shackles which had already become galling-both to her heart and to her pride. For Colonel Effingham, gladly as he would have kept the truth from her knowledge, could not altogether hide within his own breast the secret that his family was bitterly opposed to his marriage with Miss Barham. the first hint which reached her that so it was, Margaret, who was thoroughly conscious that "obligation"—if any there existed—was on Brian's side (for had she not saved his life, and, in doing so, endangered that which to her was more precious still?), manifested a degree of indignation which rather surprised her lover.

"What right have they," she said,

"without knowing me even by sight, to be so bitter? I have very little money, but I am not extravagant; and, besides, if you like me—that ought to be enough for them. I wonder they are not ashamed of showing themselves to be so mercenary and heartless."

To this tirade Brian, whose prejudices of consanguinity were far from strong, responded,

"If you had lived in the world, Madge, which you never shall do, you would recognize the fact that everyone is more or less mercenary, and what you call heartless; but, as regards my people, I really don't see why you should bother yourself—you need never see anything of them. I am independent as to money, and we will live abroad altogether, and snap our fingers at them."

The words ran glibly enough off the speaker's tongue, for, not being himself cursed with a sensitive nature, he was entirely unaware of the effect which they produced upon his hearer. To become—against her will—a member of any family, let the members of that family be ever so unjustly and selfishly prejudiced against her, was sufficient to arm, in Margaret's mind, a perfect battery of angry resistance. She could not, and she would not—she declared—submit to such a degradation; and as to living abroad, as if she were ashamed of herself, or he (Brian) of her, that she would not do.

"You may—if it pleases you—spend your life," she wound up by saying, "in snapping your fingers at your family, but I will do nothing of the kind. If they become polite, and do what is correct (although I am really ignorant what that is) on the occasion, I will let by-gones be bygones; but, if not, I"—but here Madge's courage failed her, and, instead of uttering, with a clear voice, the alternative she had intended to pronounce, she faintly mur-

mured—"I will never become—with my own consent—one of them at Hartwell."

After this rather stormy explanation, Colonel Effingham, having arrived at the conclusion that, without some show of cordiality on the part of his belongings. Margaret would still refuse to become his wife, obtained, with considerable difficulty, certain concessions from the more powerful belligerents. He was the only son, and independent, as far as income went, of his parents. To quarrel with him was very far from their wish, and therefore Lady Brentwood condescended to write as cordial a letter as she could bring herself to pen to Miss Barham; whilst Mignonette, the moment that she obtained permission to do so, poured forth from her warm, innocent heart, whole pages of sisterly congratulation to "Madge." In process of time, also, some inexpensive presents arrived from Hartwell, and, later still, a promise that Mignonette would accept an invitation

which had reached her from Oakden, and act as bridesmaid at the coming ceremony.

With this very moderate amount of cordiality, Margaret was forced to seem, at least—if not to be—content. It had become absolutely impossible for her, had the wish to do so been even stronger than it was, to change the current of her destiny. As we have seen, she was far from possessing the strength of mind which enables a woman to boldly breast the fierce tide of public opinion; and she could no more have braved the comments which would have followed on the announcement that her marriage with Colonel Effingham was "off," than she could have stood, without flinching, before a file of soldiers, under orders to shoot her dead upon the spot.

"Society" had been, after the announcement of her marriage, very civil to her. Colonel Effingham was highly connected, and his uncle, the General—who was one of the County notables—had early shown himself in favour of the match. As a matter of course, there existed, at the bottom of this seeming good-will, a substratum of envy, dislike, and malice. Margaret, penniless Margaret, had been successful where other girls had failed, and therefore, with the one exception of Kathleen O'Reilly, who was genuinely glad when the ban was removed, and she was allowed to associate with Margaret as of yore, my heroine counted, since her restoration to the smiles of society, not one real well-wisher the more.

The wedding was to be a very quiet one. Colonel Effingham, autocratic, and lord paramount, according to his wont (Cousin Susan's dislike to him had rapidly grown and prospered since he had, as she phrased it, "had everything his own way") detested—as is, indeed, the manner of most men—a "fussy" and conspicuous wedding. Could he altogether have had his

way-and he did try for it-the marriage would have been a merely civil one. Registry Office would have made Brian Effingham and Margaret Barham man and wife before the law, and they would have been as surely tied together as if the ceremony which begins with "Dearly beloved," and ends with "Amazement," had been read by white-robed priest in front of them. But to prevent so startling an innovation as the one which the bridegroom expectant quite seriously proposed, he found a whole battalion of relations and friends arrayed. Such a thing never had before (in their rank of life at least) been heard of; and as to its being a real marriage, why, no bride, such was the universal opinion, could possibly feel herself to be a wife, unless she were properly wedded in a Church.

It was this argument—one which he did not possess the means of contesting—that eventually decided Brian to, for once, yield the disputed point. The whole thing was, as he told, not only himself but everyone with whom he chanced to converse, a confounded bore; and he only hoped that the "d——l-dodger" would cut the whole thing short, so that he might the sooner get away from the nuisance of it.

It was, as I have said, and as might be expected under the circumstances, a very simple wedding. The bridesmaids, of whom there were but two, consisted of Nettie Effingham and Miss O'Reilly. Brian absolutely refused to be bothered by a "best man." "Was such an appendage a positively necessary part of the ceremony?" he had asked, and, on being answered in the negative, he had said that he would be—dashed—if he would not do without one.

The grief, as well as the displeasure of Miss de Beauvoir (for she considered that Madge's parents ought to have interposed their authority, in order to prevent the immolation of their daughter) increased daily in intensity as time wore on, and she hourly saw a diminution of her hope that, even at the eleventh hour, "something" would occur to prevent the consummation of the sacrifice.

The wettest of wet blankets did the poor old lady—during that time of trial—prove; she seemed suddenly to have been stricken with tongue paralysis, so mute did she sit, and stand, and walk. Not even Margaret could succeed in inducing her to enter into the very briefest of conversation; she was, in very truth, well-nigh broken-hearted, but hers being the sorrow of a plain old maid, she was simply given credit for being a cantankerous "elderly party," and one who, at a wedding, or, indeed, in any festive scene, was decidedly out of place.

The wedding ceremony, short although binding, is over; and, as Brian will not hear of waiting for the breakfast, the hour of departure is near at hand. Margaret gives one anxious glance at the French clock upon the stairs, and then, creeping softly to her godmother's room, she closes the door behind her.

The woman so soon to be left alone is seated at her reading-table, a volume of heavy literature lying open before her. Barren of tears are the prominent blue eyes, and cold and hard looks the poor, worn face, as Madge, with a burst of passionate weeping, throws her arms round her old friend's neck.

"My love, my pretty one," murmured a voice, which made its way straight to the girl's grieving heart, "may God bless you with all his mercies—may he keep you good, and brave, and patient unto your life's end!"

The words have scarcely left her lips when a loud knocking is heard at the door, and a voice outside, speaking as one having authority, calls out,

"Now then, we shall be late for the train! Everything is ready. Good-bye, Miss de Beauvoir; you must not keep Madge," and so, without further delay or ceremony, the bride is hurried away.

Hurried away from home and parents, and from the ills she knows, to those which (as yet only dreamily guessed at and imagined) may, in reality, be so infinitely harder to endure than any which busy Fancy had hitherto dared to paint.

CHAPTER XI.

A "FLARE UP."

To is to Paris that the newly-married pair are, in the first instance, bound, but their stay in le lieu du monde ou on peut le mieux se passer du bonheur, is not intended to be of long duration. It is to Florence, and thence to Rome and Naples, that they are eventually bound, and Madge, in the delight with which she anticipates the novel pleasures which await her, almost forgets the fact that the cross which she has condemned herself to carry is likely to prove a heavy one.

As she sits, the October head-wind blowing coldly in her face, on the deck of the small Calais mail-steamer, she congratulates herself sincerely on the immunity from that least compassionated of humanills—namely, lemaldemer—which she enjoys. An inward voice whispers to her that Brian would be not a little "put out" were his wife to betray symptoms of suffering from a complaint so, in every way, unpleasant, and from which he is, in his own person, entirely exempt. With her warm travelling-cloak drawn closely round her, she watches his firmly-knit, upright figure as, with the unwavering step of one accustomed to tread a vessel's deck in storms as well as in calm weather, he walks steadily to and fro, side by side with one of the Ulster-coated passengers, on whom his (the Colonel's) authoritative voice and aristocratic appearance seem to have wrought their usual effect. Keeping careful step with his new acquaintance, and apparently listening with rapt attention to what Madge justly concludes to

be, on some subject or other, a "laying down," in oracular fashion, of "the law," the stoutly built British subject, who is probably amongst those who take pride in the fact that they never, let the weather be what it will, are driven to take refuge "below," has doubtless not the remotest idea that the forlorn-looking woman, the tip of whose nose is alone visible, and who sits, "like a sparrow on the house-top," alone, has been, only three short hours before, wedded to the military gentleman (the stout passenger has read the Colonel's name on his despatch-box), whose knowledge of "steam" is so remarkable, and who has singled him out as a kindred spirit with whom it is satisfactory to discuss a question so all-important.

Meanwhile, Madge, though she is not the least in the world sea-sick, has begun (for the wretched little vessel tosses and plunges ominously) to experience—not fear, her nerves are too well strung, and her "common sense" too pronounced, for actual alarm to have entered into her brain—but although it has not for a passing second occurred to her that the May Queen may be about to come to grief, yet she does, as I was about to say, feel a certain craving (weak woman that she is) for a re-assuring word—for some evidence, in short, that he understands and feels for her discomfort, from the man who has now the right to be her protector alike from the small as from the big ills of life.

It is a childish thought and wish perhaps, but not methinks an altogether unnatural one; for Madge has been accustomed from her cradle to be made much of, and now, in the almost darkness of that gusty autumn night, she watches the stalwart form of her *insouciant* companion with eyes that are dim with unshed tears.

The lights of Calais, as the steamer slowly nears them, are a welcome sight to all who, like Margaret, have deemed the risk of being soused with sea-spray a far less evil than the endurance of the "sights and sounds," only too exclusively "human,". to which, between decks, they would have been subjected. The entrance into smooth water is appreciated even by those who have earned for themselves the reputation of "good sailors;" but to Colonel Effingham it seems a matter of indifference whether the waves are angry, or whether they are still, and the vessel has arrived almost alongside the quay before it has occurred to him to check the flow of words which he still has at his command; but, when he is at last alive to a sense of his responsibilities, Margaret almost wishes, so terribly energetic does he become, that he were again dead to them. The crowd on board is considerable, and Madge, who has an especial objection to being hustled, would have infinitely preferred remaining quietly on her bench till such time as the more adventurous spirits had, by dint of

elbowing and pushing, made their way across the narrow bridge which connected the steamer with the shore.

"Don't you think," Mrs. Effingham suggests, "that we had better wait a little? There are such crowds, and one gets knocked about so by all those hurrying people."

"Nonsense! Why should you be knocked about?" her husband replies. "I'll take care that no one touches you. There, take my arm, and don't give way to anyone. It is the greatest mistake in life not to hold one's own."

Margaret, desirous to please him, or rather afraid to betray a wish that is contrary to his commands, does as she is bid; and then and there commences such a fierce struggle for power, such a well-contested battle to be first, as would have convinced Margaret, had she needed evidence of the fact, not only that Brian was one of those men who would prefer death to submission, but that his blind faith in

his own supremacy rendered him incapable of seeing the absurdity, as well as the danger and inconvenience, of throwing away so much manly energy in a cause so trifling.

Not a little frightened is Madge before the goal—that is to say, the far side of the bridge—is reached; for Brian, although he breathes fire and flames against any "confounded snob" who comes "between the wind and his nobility," does not scruple to thrust aside, with the full weight of his stalwart person—with shoves of elbows and with cuff of fist—any and every luckless being who happens, from the mere misfortune of over-propinquity, to fall under the lash of his displeasure.

"I really felt alarmed," wrote Margaret, three days later, to her old friend at Oakden. "It was foolish, I daresay, but I fancied some one must turn upon him, and then in the crowd there might have been a fight. Only think how horrible! We

dined, or rather supped, in a private room in the station hotel. There was a huge fire in the grate, which was very pleasant, and two tall candles, not exactly wax ones, upon the table. Appetite I had none, which seemed rather to put Brian out, for, as he said, the dinner for two would have to be paid for, so it was a shame not to eat it. I could see that he endeavoured to make the most of the time—twenty minutes -which was allowed us for our repast; and a stormy time that twenty minutes proved! for when Matteo, who, by the way, seems terribly afraid of his master, brought in the bill, Brian broke into a rage. 'What did they mean" (I can't write down all the words he used), "by charging two francs for candles when they had only minutes? alight ten ' Pardon. been Monsieur,' interposes Matteo, meekly. 'mais il y a vingt que Monsieur et Madame sont ici, et le convoi va partir dans deux seconds. Monsieur ferait mieux de se dépêcher.'

The which was so undeniably true that Brian, with a 'Pay it, and be ----', hurried on his overcoat, whilst Morgan came bustling in to see that all was right with me. But, before we left the room, what do you think that Brian did? You will never guess, so I may as well tell you. Took both the tall candles, of which we had burned about two inches, and thrust them into the blazing fire. To see the flames tearing up the chimney was-as the Americans say—a caution; but we speedily, for fear of consequences, made our escape; Brian in fits of laughter, in which, I honestly confess, I heartily joined."

CHAPTER XII.

NOTHING IN COMMON.

"I WILL go, of course, if you wish it, but I don't myself see much fun in looking at four bare walls; and how anyone can care to see a place simply because some one else was shut up in it a hundred years ago, passes my comprehension."

It was of the prison of the Conciergerie that Brian was speaking, the prison where poor Marie Antoinette was, after the execution of Louis XVI., for four weary months confined. Colonel Effingham, who not only loved, but was a judge of "Art," would infinitely have preferred spending his last day in Paris in the Luxembourg Gallery, to

devoting some precious minutes to such "a piece of sentimental humbug" as the one on which Margaret's heart was so firmly set. He yielded, however, with a tolerably good grace, to her entreaty, and it was with gratitude as well as pleasure that she found herself en route for the Palais de Justice.

We will describe in her own words her. short visit to that misery-haunted place.

"We were not there more than five minutes, for Brian was soon tired of the bare walls (ten or eleven feet square the prison is) which spoke so eloquently to me. We had to stoop in order to enter, the archway having been lowered, the custodian told us, in order to humiliate the haughty Austrian, who had declared her determination never to bend her head. With the exception that her wretched little bed is no longer there, the prison room is in precisely the same condition as it was when a scion of the proudest line in Europe endured, for ninety long days and nights,

such an amount of moral torture and degradation as seldom falls to the lot of well-born mortals to undergo. Her own faded armchair, totally unsuggestive of rest, and the crucifix of bronze, at which the poor soul must have often knelt in prayer, stood precisely as they did when she was led forth to death; whilst pointed out carefully to us by the guardian was the spot wherewatched during all that fearful time-a rude and cruel turnkey was stationed, to scan her every act and movement. imagination—worked upon by these piteous sights and records—pictured to me this unhappy woman's fate, I could not forbear asking myself how far it was deserved, and whether, during the long hours of terrible solitude which she was condemned to pass, remorse, of the kind which visited 'The Lady' in her 'Dream,' added to the quota of the ex-queen's despair. Did self-reproach embitter her last hours, the reproach that

'She never remembered the wretched ones That starved for want of food,'

or did she go to her doom as careless of the wants and sufferings of the poor as she had been in the days when countless thousands were clamouring for bread, and when she, their sovereign, asked the memorable question, 'Why, then, do they not eat Unhappy woman! It was this cakes ? ignorance which might, with her judges, have in some sort pleaded in her excuse. Thousands were dying, their feeble voices crying out in piteous protest against the luxury, the extravagance, and the unfeeling insolence of the rich—but their moans reached not the sovereign's ears. Press in those days did not, in columns which may well be called 'agony' ones, tell (as now would be the case) that starvation was thinning the ranks of the poor, and that the misery of the long-patient many—that awful misery which at length

called for the terrible remedy of the great French Revolution—had found a voice at last; and this being so, may we not be charitable enough to believe that the truth never reached the ears of the lighthearted Queen? A truth, nevertheless, which, when the son of Victor Emmanuel heard it, he despoiled himself of a portion (and his income is not for a King considerable) of his superfluous revenues (his "Civil" list, in short), in order that the poor might have bread to eat. Truly, dear cousin, does it not seem to you that the heavy retribution with which this thoughtless, ignorant, yet probably kind-hearted Queen was visited, is far more merited by the rich in our days, who-well acquainted with the bitter sufferings of the poor—either hoard up their worshipped gold, or spend it exclusively on their own precious selves? were, even as I before remarked, only five minutes in the prison, the reflections which have occupied some time in the writing, passed with lightning-like rapidity through my brain; and when Brian's 'Now then!' announced that I was to follow him and our cicerone into the adjoining, and still smaller cell—the one in which, after attempting to cut his throat, Robespierre was for about twelve hours confined—I, to outward seeming, at least, was quite ready to obey the call."

It was characteristic of Brian Effingham that the memory of Robespierre's desperate act, and the sight of the Girondists' small Hall of Assembly (now a prison Chapel) adjoining, interested him far more than did the sorrow and death, however heroically endured, of a woman, albeit that woman had been a queen. He could enter into and understand the fierce passion, the violent animosities which actuated the first, whilst the tender memories, the piteous tremors, which must—for she was human—have been, during her long and solitary imprisonment, rife within the breast of Marie Antoinette, received from him—for the reason that they passed his comprehension—neither sympathy nor reverence.

"Well, I hope you are satisfied. I confess that I did not see anything very wonderful—excepting, perhaps, that the man who showed us the place really seemed to have a sort of reverence for it."

"I suppose because he concluded that you, being an Englishman, would sympathize with the feeling, and give him an extra franc in consequence," suggested Madge; "for," she continued, "he could not really feel any veneration for the place. He is paid, of course, by the Republic; and then, being showman of it every day——"

"He must have just about as much respect for Marie Antoinette's memory as the old *cocher de fiacre* had, you remember, for that of the murdered Archbishop of

Paris. 'Mais, Madame, on l'a remplacé,' he said, simply; after you had been so pite-ously lamenting his death! I don't think that I ever laughed more heartily in my life," and Colonel Effingham, stirred again to a sense of the ridiculous by the memory of the little scene, fairly broke into a roar. But Madge could not, so moved had she been by the recollections which the place they had visited called up, bring herself to join in what seemed to her somewhat misplaced merriment.

On the whole, she was not sorry to leave Paris. Many causes contributed to make her stay there alarming; and, amongst these, one of the most trying were the street crossings! At no time absolutely free from peril, these were rendered to her doubly dangerous by a mania on the part of her husband, which induced him to absolutely forbid (even though a passing carriage was almost "upon" them) the very slightest hastening of step. He

would seize a horse by the bit (and had done so more than once in the crowded Rue Royale, and in the Place de Vendôme), dashing the animal back by main strength of arm, sooner than wife of his should undergo the indignity of being hurried. Verily, as Madge sometimes thought, the Providence which protects drunkards must have watched over this semi-madman, or he would surely have suffered for the daring which already began to render her existence one of constant excitement and alarm.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARGARET BEGINS TO TREMBLE.

In what might be called his rational moments—that is to say, when the "bee" in his "bonnet" (the bee that was for ever humming its refrain in praise of Brian Effingham's opinions) chanced to be asleep, there could exist no pleasanter companion, and—on many subjects—few more instructive ones than the abovenamed individual. If he could only have been kept from indiscriminate arguing! only have been induced to believe in the possibility that another than he might have right on his side, and only abandon the fixed idea that he (Brian Effingham)

was "Sir Oracle," and that not a dog of them all must permit himself to bark before him, then—as no one was more willing to allow than his wife—who more charming as a companion than the man whom "the world" had agreed to designate as "the Ruffian."

It was—during the early days of their Continental travel—a source of some regret to Madge that Brian, being afflicted with an extra amount of English reserve, superciliousness, and mistrust, should carefully have abstained from either encouraging intimacies with former acquaintances, or breaking fresh ground with any of the apparently very unexceptionable fellow-travellers who were thrown by the chances of locomotion in their way.

It would be pleasant, Margaret thought, to—at least, occasionally—vary the monotony of their tête-à-têtes with a table d'hôte dinner; and she more than once found herself envying the laughing girls—mostly

English or American—whom they sometimes met upon the stairs, they (the newly-married pair) returning, after a severe day's sight-seeing, to a diner à deux in their own little salon, whilst the envied ones were on their way to swell the numbers at a long table, filled from top to bottom with the sojourners in the hotel; a reunion at which new faces, and, peradventure, new ideas might, if they did not stir the feelings, or rouse the intellectual faculties of the company, possibly give them, at any rate, something new to talk about when they retired to their respective rooms.

Once, and only once, did Margaret venture on a feeble attempt to change the order of things. The answer she received was conclusive.

"I cannot conceive," Brian said, "what pleasure you can possibly expect to find there. To see a lot of vulgar people—"

"I don't know why they must necessarily be vulgar," put in Margaret, gently. "They must be, or they would dine in their own rooms——"

"Perhaps some of them like variety, and others may not be rich enough to afford a salon."

"Then they had better stay at home. A set of starving, ignorant nobodies, and, what is worse than all, every third man is a parson! I hate the sight of those fellows!—they bring discredit, especially in a Roman Catholic country, upon England. You saw that brute in the court-yard to-day, almost in canonicals, and with a fat wife and grown-up daughters tacked on to his skirts—by Jove, it is enough to disgust one with one's country altogether!"

It was not long after this explosion of wrath that Madge began to be tolerably sure that the seclusion in which they lived had its safe side. It needed so little to work up Brian's smouldering choler to danger-point, and he was ever so ready

primed to take offence, that she was absolutely seldom free from a sense of peril which kept her nerves upon the rack. One of her sources of anxiety was Matteo, their Italian courier, whose fear of, as well as bitter dislike to, his intemperate employer, Mrs. Effingham was not slow to discover. More than once had she noted an evil scowl (after having been, with undue violence, reprimanded) on the man's dark, bearded face, but it was not until the day of their leaving Paris that she began to be seriously alarmed for the consequences of her husband's violence. It chanced that after Matteo, who was an admirable valet, had packed and corded "il Signor Colonello's" trunks, that the latter suddenly remembered the need—one which he declared to be imperative—of a book which lay, as such books are given to do, at the bottom of the largest trunk.

"I must have it out. Quick! No humbug; there is no time to lose. Begin at once."

- "Ma, Signor," began Matteo, "Eimpossibile; the train leaves the embarcadère in three quarters of an hour, and——"
- "Begin, I say, and be dashed to you——"
- "Ma, Signor Colonello, it will take me half an hour to pack this trunk again—and——"

But the half angry, half frightened Southerner was brought up with a run, as the saying is, by Brian, who, suddenly drawing a small pistol, which he always kept loaded, from his travelling-bag, held it in very unpleasant propinquity to the courier's head.

"I tell you what, you dashed fool," he said, "if you don't unpack that trunk, find the book, and pack the things in again in five minutes by my watch—here it is "—holding up the big gold timepiece before the eyes of the trembling wretch,—"I'll shoot you through the head!"

Now, whether it was that Matteo actually

gave credence to this awful threat, or whether he thought the Colonel had suddenly taken leave of his senses, matters little; the result proved that the estimate of the latter, as regarded the time that was absolutely necessary for the performance of the work in hand, had not been an erroneous one. Half a minute before the expiration of the allotted five, Matteo's allotted task was finished, and, pallid with rage and fear, perspiration streaming from every pore, and with hatred as fierce as ever surged in the breast of a Neapolitan vengeance-seeker burning in his veins, hea somewhat scrubby and despicable specimen of the genus homo-stood crouching before his master, who, as his habit was, ceased—the moment the affair was over to take any interest either in it or in the "cowardly hound," as he considered the maddened-with-impotent-fury Italian, who had dared to have an opinion of his own.

But Margaret, whose nerves were not of

iron, and who possessed that keen perception of apparently trifling signs and portents which is alike woman's protection and her bane, could not so soon forget. There was that in Matteo's countenance (excepting when addressing her) which, to her thinking, told of lurking rancour, and of a determination to be one day avenged upon his despot. Moreover, Morgan, the lady's maid, who loved talking, and was not remarkable for discretion, heightened her mistress's alarm by sundry repetitions of Matteo's expressions regarding "the Colonel," the which repetitions did not—we may be sure—lose in telling.

"It's enough to make one's blood run cold—it really is, 'm—to hear him talk. He's afraid—he said so only yesterday—to carry a knife, because of not being able to help some day using it upon his master. You'll be so good, 'm, as not to say to Mossou Matto that you heard this piece of shocking wickedness from me, he'd like as

not give me a coup de couteau, as he calls it, if he was to know it." And Mrs. Morgan, who is slowly drawing a brush through her "lady's" rich chestnut-hued hair, preparatory to plaiting it up loosely for the night, glances furtively (but in vain, for it is only twelve inches square) at the mirror, in hopes of there discovering some clue to Mrs. Effingham's inner thoughts.

But that sensible young person is little likely to betray, either by word or looks, the tumult that is at work within her. With a smiling face she declares her opinion that Matteo was "only in fun," recommends her maid to be careful in her speech, and, above all, to refrain from repeating the words of a fellow-servant, and then betakes herself to a pillow which is rendered sleepless by reason of the ugly visions which surround her couch.

The following day she, in her pretty, conciliating fashion, has (having said no word of her intentions to Brian, who

would, as she well knows, furiously resent the proceeding) recourse to the pusillanimous method of appealing to the "good feeling," as well as good sense, of the courier.

"Monsieur," she tells him, "means nothing. Il a bon cœur, seulement il est un peu vif, et ceux qui lui servent, feraient bien de s'y accoutumer. Se fâcher contre Monsieur serait vraiment une grande imprudence de la part de ses domestiques."

It was by words such as these, accompanied by a gracious manner, and interspersed with flattering encomiums on his own admirable qualities, that poor Margaret, trembling for the safety of the husband whom she would already, had he not been himself a stumbling-block in the way, have begun dearly to love, endeavoured to propitiate the servant who had been stirred by insult into enmity. But she could not, with all her powers of conciliation, produce any visible effect upon Matteo. He listened, and was all but mute. Naught save

his shoulders—eloquent as is the fashion of Italians—spoke, until, when about to leave the room, the words, "Master he gunpowder!" came slowly from his bearded lips.

Poor Margaret! This was the first, but not, by many a one, the last occasion on which, prompted by her fears, she, without the knowledge of her husband, adopted measures for his protection. bably her woman's nerves exaggerated, in some instances, the dangers to which his reckless violence of temper so often exposed him. One fact, too, is certain, that few husbands—especially such as approach in the very slightest degree to the type represented by Brian Effingham -would be induced to tolerate (if discovered) such secret means as were adopted by Madge for her reckless partner's good. Neither excellence of motive, nor the fear inspired by his own fierceness of temperament, would have pleaded in her excuse,

had the fact of her having condescended to reason with "that confounded cur," Matteo, have come to his ears.

There arrived a time when Colonel Effingham did become aware that Madge (it was generally for his own sake, and always from justifiable motives) was not always as open and confidential with him as it was in his nature to be with her, and from that hour suspicion entered into his That Margaret was afraid of him, breast. he would at no time have believed possible. A contrary persuasion might have thrown doubt on his own entire exemption from defect or flaw; besides, Madge was no coward (this conviction did not, however, beyond the first year of his married life, continue to plead with him in his wife's behalf), and she would surely never be induced, by a few hasty words, to consider him in the light of a bugaboo.

Ah! how little—pardon, kind reader, the triteness of this remark—do we realize in

any degree the evil effects which our faults of character may produce upon others! Those who from want of self-control, and from indulgence in violence of speech and conduct, develop either in child or wife, or indeed in any who are so unfortunate as to come within their influence, the ignoble passion of fear should be lenient in their judgments upon those who,

"Trembling at man's capricious moods," are too often untrue, not only to themselves, but to the principles which have been inculcated in them, and on which they profess to act.

CHAPTER XIV.

BRIAN RESISTS ADVICE.

A MONGST his many travelling grievances (and, seeing that they were so many, it struck Madge not unfrequently that her autocrat would have been more comfortable, as well as more easy in his mind, had he remained at home), few vexed Brian's spirit more than any failure in obtaining for the use of himself and his wife the luxury of a coupé. It was not often that he found himself (having been foiled in his wishes either by the non-existence of the article in question, or by the superior bluster, wealth, or arrogance of a rival claimant) forced to occupy an eighth place, possibly with the annoyance of an

"Infant clamorous, whether pleased or pained," in front of him, and a fussy père de famille, taking up, with his belongings, two-thirds of the detested wagon.

An especial dread had Madge of the occasions, happily rare, when Matteo, allowed carte blanche as to bribery, found himself obliged to confess that coupé pour le voyage there was none. How she dreaded (this girl, to whom every sight and sound new, and who, under different auspices, would so intensely have enjoyed this opening out of a new life)—how greatly, I was about to say, did Brian's wife dread the moment when he, bristling at all points with a sense of injured dignity, and with a desire to show that, let them be who they would, he both could and did look down upon them all, would take his place amongst the despised profanum vulgus, by whose contact it was his lot to be, during some hateful hours, contaminated.

"No coupé! Get in! Look sharp!" were the words which greeted pale Margaret's ears when, the restraining doors being flung open, she finds herself, with the lately imprisoned crowd of self-seeking travellers, on the platform of the Mâcon Débarcadère. Almost before she aware of what is happening, her light person is placed in a back corner seat. Brian's Ulster is thrown on the one opposite to her, whilst his exceptionally large despatch-box, together with a squaremouthed travelling-bag, capable of containing a sufficient amount of necessary clothing for a voyage up the Nile, is, with a huge bundle of railway-rugs, umbrellas. and other impedimenta, thrown by Brian's lavish hand after his passive wife. After performing this exploit, the owner of the property, animate, as well as inanimate, which he has placed in the carriage, incontinently disappears, and Margaret sees, with dismay, six persons, two of whom are

of larger dimensions than usual, enter in separate detachments the vehicle in which she is seated.

Nor do they come empty-handed. the contrary, each man and woman (of the latter there being two) is ladened with fully as much property as can by possibility be carried, while Madge is forced (fear of Brian's displeasure, should she fail in her watch-dog's duty, being well before her eyes) to defend the seat on which reposes, in sign of suzerainty, his coat, against all Very considerable, meantime, is the difficulty of finding room, either within the netting, or amongst the feet of the passengers (who are all English), for the many articles which each lady and gentleman, naturally desirous to have their respective properties under their own eyes -id est, carriage free-have crammed into the wagon. Especially busy is one of the party, the mate apparently of a lady who deposited her person (somewhat

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scowlingly, as she greatly prefers a corner place) on the seat next to Margaret. He, the husband, who clearly comes within the category of "fussy men," has apparently taken upon himself the task of putting everything to rights. "The sort of creature," Margaret says to herself, "with whom Brian will be certain to be furious." And while this thought, together with a trifling accession of wonder at the said Brian's long delay, darts through her mind, the "busy man" has, with possibly the best intentions, done a deed of which he little anticipated the extremely unpleasant consequences.

Perceiving that Colonel Effingham's huge despatch box (a collis which could not, by any human means at hand, be forced under the seat) is incommoding both Margaret and his wife, he says, calling to one of the officials, and speaking in what may be called broken French—

"Issy-issy-dans le baggage wagon,"

and in another moment—an exit which is instantaneously followed by Brian's tumultuous entrance—the unlucky article in question was safely deposited on the platform, and the long line of carriages streamed slowly away from under the glazed roof of the Station.

"A good riddance," says the busy man, as he settles himself as comfortably as circumstances permit of his doing, and looks complacently—not only at his wife, but at the very pretty girl in the corner, who has more than once turned red and white alternately during the space of the last half minute. "It was morally and physically impossible that that monstrous box could be found room for in this carriage," and the man looks round, as if for applause, on the fellow-beings around him.

But his self-congratulation is of short duration. In a voice of thunder, and with eyes almost starting from his head with rage, Brian bursts forth"Is it my despatch-box you are speaking of, sir?" and then, not seeing where he had placed it, the precious receptacle of his most valued treasures, he adds, still more furiously,

"Has anyone—have you, sir, presumed to touch my property? Did you dare to have it taken out of the carriage, you—"

"Tush, tush, my good sir—don't let's have any bad language. Ladies present, you know. Your property is on the platform, and——"

"On the platform, you infernal, meddling scoundrel!" begins Brian, now almost blind with passion, for not only has this "miserable snob" (one of the agreeable epithets, by the way, which he hurls at his enemy) caused him to run the risk of losing very valuable property, but he has called him "my good sir," and presumed to offer him advice. So the war of words is by no means a mild one, the "snob" being apparently well inclined to give—as a free-

born Briton should—as good as he gets. Meanwhile the women are not idle, for, hanging on to Brian's skirts, the wife of his antagonist is calling him (Brian), as she afterwards informed a friend, "every name she could lay her tongue to," whilst Margaret, shocked as well as terrified, endeavours to divert her husband's fury from the officious stranger to herself.

"Indeed, indeed he meant to be civil. He did not know that the despatch box was yours; and it was all done before I could explain anything."

Thus pleads Margaret, but she pleads in vain, nor does the storm subside till, at the first stopping-station, Brian springs from the carriage, with the intention, as Margaret conjectures, of either telegraphing to Mâcon, or of returning by the first opportunity to the town in which his property—bank notes and gold galore—is, he hopes, still to be found intact.

More than half to Madge's relief, the

train steams on without the volcanic element which has so greatly disturbed the interior of the carriage, in which, silent, ashamed, and most unhappy, she is condemned to pursue her journey alone. Everyone, casting compassionate glances at the deserted young creature, behaves towards her with marked civility. Nay, the "busy man," busy no longer, for he has been snubbed by his wife for his overreadiness to interfere in other folk's concerns, makes a sort of apology for his late antagonist, it being of course, as he shrewdly remarks, "uncommon unpleasant to find one's luggage nobody knows where."

Amongst the six voyageurs who remain, till the end of Madge's day's journey, her fellow-travellers, there is one, a young and beardless man; a boy, in fact, almost, who—ensconced in his corner, and apparently wholly occupied with a book—has taken no visible interest whatever, either in the fracas, which was as violent as it

was short, or in the deserted lady, whose position, as well as her good looks, have gained for her a considerable amount of sympathy and admiration.

With her mind fully occupied by other thoughts, Mrs. Effingham has scarcely been aware of the presence in the far corner of the carriage of one who, seated as she is herself, with his back to the engine, bears in his person no distinguishing mark—no peculiarity capable of attracting attention.

She is, with Morgan, keeping careful watch over the jewel-case by her side, and Matteo bustling about over the luggage, standing for a few moments on the platform of the Chambéry Station, when the young man advances towards her, and, touching his hat, says shyly,

"I beg your pardon; but can you tell me if that was Colonel Effingham who left the carriage in so great a hurry to-day?"

For a moment, Madge hesitates to an-

She lives in constant fear that something—she knows not what—may happen to her husband. A man is not for nothing born a walking typhoon, a detonating gun, ever on the point of exploding, and, for aught she knows, this quiet-looking young fellow may be the match which is destined to make the dangerous machine go off. It is thus that, for a passing moment, she, rather wondering at the boy's temerity, reflects, but her natural courtesy, together with the circumstance that her interlocutor looks "so very young," gets the better of her unreasoning fears, and with a smile she says,

"Yes, that was Colonel Effingham. Do you know him? Have you anything to say to him?"

"Nothing," the boy hesitatingly answers. "Only, will he, do you think, come back again?"

The query, as addressed to herself,

rather amuses Margaret. She is young, and le coté ridicule of any matter is apt to strike her fancy quickly; moreover, it is too much her habit to speak before she thinks.

"I hope so," she answers, with a laugh, "for I am his wife, and it would be awk-ward to have to look for him."

But little more, as I have said, than a boy in years, and a gentleman—as Margaret has at once discovered—is the young fellow, whose expressive face, in spite of the efforts which he evidently makes to control himself, works after Margaret's little speech with some evidently painful emotion. At first he appears almost literally unable to speak. He tugs at his shirt collar, and emits little gasps, the effects, as Margaret rightly judges, of sudden and far from agreeable surprise. At last he, with evident effort, says,

"Thanks; I had no right to trouble you; I did not know that—that—Colonel

Effingham was—on the Continent. He is not acquainted with me either by sight or name;" and, having so said, he lifts his hat, and retires from her view.

A strange rencontre—at least, so it seems to Madge, who is far more occupied with the puzzle which the lad's words and manner present to her than she is with the chasse after the missing despatch-box, which has carried her husband away on his backward journey. She has not long to wait for his advent. In two hours after her arrival there, he is at Turin, the missing property in his hand. One of the good points in Brian's character is that he does not "bear malice," and takes less than no pleasure in "treasuring up a wrong." In his satisfaction at recovering his missing property, Madge's weakness in allowing the "fellow" to take liberties with what did not belong to him was-if not precisely overlooked—at least not angrily commented on, whilst the scene in the railway carriage,

and more especially the frantic proceedings of the angry wife, some of whose vituperations were repeated to him by Madge, caused him to roll upon the comfortless little hotel sofa in a perfect ecstasy of merriment.

"So she called me a brute and a monsert? What fun!" he, wiping the moisture from his eyes, says. "Nobody else, I think, took any part in the row, did they?" he, after a pause (and wholly, as Madge feels well assured, without reference to the silent passenger in the corner), asks.

"No one; but after the train arrived, and when I was standing waiting for the luggage, and for Matteo, a pale thin young man—a lad almost—spoke to me very civilly, and asked if you were Colonel Effingham."

Brian starts visibly; amongst his useful gifts, that of self-command exists not.

"A young man! What was he like? You ought not to have allowed him to

speak to you. What more did he say?"
"Nothing, excepting that he did not know you were abroad, and that you were not in any way acquainted with him."

Brian asks no more questions, nor does Margaret think it necessary to enlarge upon the evident and painful agitation which the young man's manner had betrayed. Already she is beginning to have concealments from her husband; her naturally open nature is becoming warped and contracted by the bad influence of fear.

CHAPTER XV.

MARGARET IS RENDERED USEFUL.

fashion away, and spring—the early spring, which in southern Italy bursts forth with such a sudden joyousness,—is warning the nervous amongst the sojourners in Rome that it is time to be at least thinking of their departure. The Effinghams have passed the entire winter in the Italian Capital. During a four months' stay, Madge, under intelligent guidance, and aided by her natural quickness and appreciation of the Beautiful, has made considerable progress, not only in technical knowledge, as it is called, of Art, but in

intimate acquaintance with the stirring marvels of

"The city that so long
Reigned absolute—the mistress of the world;
The mighty vision that the prophet saw,
And trembled."

Rome was, during that winter, rather exceptionally full of strangers, and the season, in spite of paragraphs in the newspapers to the effect that people were dving like flies of fever and malaria, was acknowledged to have been a good one. Balls, dinners, concerts, private theatricals, every device, in short, for creating excitement, stimulating rivalry, and benefiting trade, were had recourse to; and night after night was Margaret Effingham kept awake by the roll of carriages proceeding to, or returning from, some scene of rivalrysome gathering together of the young and gay, in which the listener, unrestful, and far, it is to be feared, from contented with her deprivations, was never permitted to bear a part.

"You ask me, dear Cousin Susan," so wrote Madge, one rainy day, to her godmother, "to write to you of our acquaintances—of those (if any) with whom we live, and move, and have our being. Well, all I can tell you is that we have almost liter-Brian has, it seems to me, a ally none. perfect horror of Society. Without youchsafing to give me any reason why so it is, he behaves with absolute rudeness to the few who appear inclined to treat us with civility, and not a single invitation, even to a dinner, has he accepted. Knowing well, as I do, how intensely pugnacious it is in his nature to be, I am sometimes inclined to rejoice over this extreme anti-sociality, if not actual moroseness of conduct. It is, of course, infinitely pleasanter to feel that he is enjoying himself, and being amusing, and even instructive with me alone, than to be quivering at some crowded dinner-party with a deadly fear lest he, at the other end

of the table, should be (clear-headed and clever as he really is) astonishing his neighbours by some astounding paradox. or rousing some man or other to a pitch of boiling wrath by an intemperate and impulsive speech. In short, dear Cousin, he keeps me (and it is hard he should do so, for I could, if he would let me, love him dearly) in constant hot water, and there are times (for his moods are ever changing, and there is no knowing when or where the volcano will break out) when the longing for peace—for peace at any price—is very strong upon me. Μv pleasantest pastime is, or rather was (for lately, even if it were within my reach, I have not felt well enough to enjoy it). riding in the Campagna. I have described to you my hunting successes on the handsome chestnut mare which Brian bought for me in Paris; he, as I could see, was pleased then, and proud when I was first in at the death, daring the dangers of

the deeply-hidden holes with which the Campagna abounds.

"Well, dear cousin, the hunting is over now—lovely wild-flowers, sweet narcissus and anemones, without end and number, are everywhere cropping up, and Brian, because, forsooth, he wants to sell, and that for a good round sum, the poor 'Red Duke,' keeps him and me on the hard road, where we meet the 'world' of Rome, going their everlasting rounds of the Borghese and Pamphili Gardens.

"There is a Royal Prince, as well as one who is not royal, but a considerable potentate, nevertheless, who both have an eye to the purchase of my steed. These two men—tailors on horseback both—with white cloths—only conceive it!—under their saddles, were riding together in the Borghese grounds two days ago, and incontinently they joined us, Brian, under the circumstances, forbearing, which is quite contrary to his wont, when made

advances to by chance acquaintances, from any overt act of 'snubbing.' I had been warned that it was the inferior Prince in point of rank who was the more in earnest of the two in his desire to become the possessor of 'Red Duke,' and moreover, it appeared that La Signora Principessa had been seized, not only with an ambition to ride, but also to sauter la barrière, and her husband, having been witness to the astounding fact that I-a woman-both could and did keep my seat when the pur sang took le saut in a manner surprising to an Italian muff, concluded that the occasion was come for indulging the Princess in her high-spirited wish. Now in a certain portion of the Borghese gardens there exists—as all visitors to Rome are well aware—a grassy enclosure, surrounded by low box hedges, in which enclosure youths from the Sacred College used to play a sort of bastard cricket, and in which now-a-days, trotting-matchesarmy inspections on an extremely diminutive scale—and other mundane diversions More than once had I, when are held. stirred thereto by an exuberance of youth, good health, and good spirits, chevied—pray don't be shocked at Brian's slang expression—the 'Red Duke' over the three-feethigh fence which divides the inner from the outer portion of the enceinte. A mere nothing of a jump, but one, nevertheless, which won for me much kudos from sundry Italian gentlemen who were witnesses of the performance. Well aware that so it was, Brian, having an eye—as I have said—to business, called out to me (I was riding in front, with the ex-Prince Royal),

"'I say, you are forgetting your jumps. Let Prince Montepulciano see how neatly the Duke takes his fences.'

"And I—well, I did not dare tell him that my heart went *pit-a-pat*, and that my back and head were aching violently. Over

I must go, and that not once, but thrice, for the two princes seemed pleased (uttering 'ohs' and 'ahs' of admiration), and, after all, Brian did not know—how should he?—that I felt ill and weak.

"After the third exploit a brilliant idea occurred to me. I would ask his ex-Royal Highness (which I did) to change saddles, and try in his turn the pleasure of a chevy! 'Je vous assure,' I said, 'que vous trouverez le saut très facile—vous ne sentirez pas la moindre secousse.' But he was not, any more than his companion, to be persuaded. He was souffrant, and a hand gently pressed on the region of the digestive organs, lent significance to his words, whilst, as for the lesser luminary, he, driven, I verily believe, by horror of the plan proposed, to desperation, excused himself by saying that he would have, he hoped, too many opportunities of 'jumping on the horse' for it to be necessary for him to do it now. verily believe that his mind was made up

then and there—and it had been far from approaching the point before—to purchase the chestnut.

"'So you see,' I said afterwards to Brian, 'that it was I who sold the horse after all.'

"He was in a good humour, having cleared about sixty pounds by the transaction. Moreover, I had mightily amused him by repeating a question which H. R. H. had that morning confidentially addressed to He was desirous to know, he said, having heard that there was in England a trick called 'bishoping,' whether or not my husband had marked the teeth of the 'Red Duke.' He would keep the secret, he said, if I would only tell him. 'Un petit mot seulement, Madame, je vous en supplie,' this with clasped hands, and a truly touching expression of countenance. I was immensely entertained. The idea was worthy of the descendant of a line of kings, and then to have been suggested (of all men in the world) of Brian!-Brian, who, though prone to exaggeration, and possessed of little veneration (in the abstract) for truth, would, I am persuaded, have cut off his right hand rather than have failed in what he considered a point of honour. To have sold, even to his worst enemy, a horse with a secret defect would have been, in his opinion, to sin against every law which should be binding on a gentleman.

"And now good night, dearest cousin; I feel a little done up to-night, but shall be probably all right to-morrow. Brian gave me a little medicine yesterday, which he said would cure my back pain if I took it with faith. The result was not quite satisfactory. 'Perhaps,' I said to myself, 'it was faith I lacked;' but he has just told me that it was a piece of tonic horse-ball that he gave me, so after all I may be thankful to find myself no worse. He has a horse's strength himself, and, I fear, does not exactly realize that some human beings may possibly be endowed with less."

CHAPTER XVI.

MISMATCHED.

THEY would soon be on their way back to England—an unwilling move on Brian's part, for he had previously intended, as he had informed his wife, to live abroad altogether. The reason—if any rational one he could have alleged—for this determination he never divulged to Margaret, and many a time, and often, had the girl lost herself in conjectures as to the causes of this intended self-banishment.

There were moments, and on those occasions the angry blood would rush tumultuously to her pale, proud cheek, when she asked herself whether it were not possible

that he was ashamed of her—as ashamed either of her appearance, her family, or of the ugly things which, as he probably was well aware, the cruel world had said about her that he preferred even banishment to the discomfort—the mortification, perhaps (and ah! how horrible was the idea!)—of facing his people with the wife whom he had chosen, hanging, an incubus not to be got rid of, on his arm.

It was not often that notions of this morbid and unhealthy description took possession of Margaret's mind, nor indeed was it probable that they would ever have done so had her health been in its normal condition, and her spirits been untried by "circumstances over which she had no control." For Madge was as far from being a self-tormentor as she was from being a woman likely to stupidly under-rate the good gifts which nature had so bountifully bestowed upon her. The natural cheerfulness of her character caused her, as a

rule, to look on the bright side of things; but the great and sudden change in all the habits of her life, the seclusion—for such it might also be called—in which she lived, and, far more than all, the existence of perpetual mental unrest which had become her portion, had combined to render Madge a totally different being from her accustomed self. She had, by the time that the hot sun and the soft southern breezes had decked the walls of Rome with garlands of pale yellow roses, grown to be a nervous, delicate creature—the firm oval of her cheek had disappeared, and to all eyes, save those of her husband (and yet, after his fashion, he loved her still). Mrs. Effingham was an altered woman.

Incessant were the pains she took to conceal from Brian the fact that it was so. His "fancy" had, as well she knew, been originally struck by what he believed to be the vastly superior physical, as well as

mental courage of brilliant, gay Madge Not intentionally had she deceived him, either in this or in any other respect. She had, in the days before she had known a care, or listened to a harsh word addressed to herself, been very-nay. even rashly fearless. Of those miserable possessions called nerves, she had—if they had crossed her mind at all—only thought of as rather ridiculous things, with which she, Margaret Barham, neither had, nor could have, anything to do, and now how grievous, how wonder-striking also was the change! Languid, spiritless, and physically weak, the long, brisk walks in which Brian delighted were to her a constantly recurring penance; while to toil up countless stairs in order to see, perhaps for the third or fourth time, the treasures of art which were massed together au quatrième, was an ordeal from which her entire being shrank.

And yet-moral coward that she was-

she found refusal to be impossible. Brian would perhaps not really in his secret mind condemn her, but would reproach her openly for her lack of "taste" and for the absence of any wish to remedy the deficiencies in her art-education, which he had so often been called upon to notice. It was in vain that Miss de Beauvoir, busying herself—as is the wont of old maiden relations—concerning the "delicate" condition of health in which Mrs. Effingham, not very surprisingly, found herself, wearied her darling with advice, and inundated her with entreaties to "take care" of herself. Madge could not be persuaded to brave Brian's cold looks and angry words when the notion that she was either troubled with those horrible things called "nerves," or rendered, by lack of health, unable to do his bidding, should obtain entrance to his mind.

It was, as I have said, with extreme unwillingness that Colonel Effingham pre-

pared to turn his steps homewards, but Margaret had clearly set her heart on finding herself, ere many more weeks should have passed over her head, within easy reach of her own people; and the time had not yet arrived when, in matters of real moment to her own comfort, he cared to thwart her wishes. Not yet, though weakened, and often languishing, had the passion which had led to this incongruous marriage "spent its novel force." When that time should have fully arrived, where, alas! for her, was any hold which she, yielding and timorous, was likely to have over him?

There are women—rarely feminine or loveable ones, however—who stand in no need of the sympathy of their kind. Neither in the joys nor the sorrows of their daily lives do they ever find themselves craving for a pitying heart on which to lean, or for a friend who, in response to the demand: "Rejoice with me," turns no

deaf ear away. To this strong-minded and independent type of her sex, Madge did not-as I think I need not remind my readers—belong. Very dependent was she on her fellow-creatures for their goodwill, and their power of entering (if heart and soul, so much the better, but at any rate of, to some extent, entering) into her joys and sorrows. It was not in her nature to keep silent, either when anxiety pressed heavily upon her, or when, like the woman in the parable, she had gained the desire of her heart, "and found the piece which she had lost."

To Madge, the having no friend to whom she can pour forth her "prime of bliss" in that she will ere long be "at home" again, is a sore deprivation. Utterly impossible would it be for her to say even a few glad words to Brian on the subject of her hoped-for joy. He does not—Madge is thoroughly cognizant of that fact—feel anything even approaching to affection for

his new connections, nor is it his wish that Margaret should evince towards them any more regard than "common decency" de-He has married her, and not her mands. family—such is Brian's dictum, one which has been that of many a man before him. and will be that of many a man after him, to the end of Time. But, in cases such as this, it not unfrequently happens that the severed woman, she who has left father and mother, together with—it may be-brothers and sisters, to cleave to her husband, finds in his relations, if not, indeed, in himself, some compensation for all that she has given up; but this, as we have seen, is by no means the case with Margaret. With the solitary exception of Mignonette, the Effingham family had one and all kept-since her marriage-virtually aloof from her. Never by any chance did Brian allude to the probable meetings with his belongings to which Madge might so naturally be looking forward; nor was

she, on her side, less reticent regarding those who were inmates of the only home which, as yet, she could call her own. But, debarred though she is from any power of allusion to the subject with which her heart and mind are so fully occupied, none the less surely and quickly do the preparations for departure continue, and it is with a strange admixture of feeling, and with regret almost overpowering satisfaction, that Madge sees the day appointed to be her last in Rome draw near.

They have driven far into the Campagna, and, returning by the Porta Appia, Brian, infinitely to Madge's satisfaction, suggests (a suggestion which is, in fact, a command) that an hour shall be wiled away amongst those wondrous ruins known as the Baths of Caracalla. It was a sunless evening, "blowing up," Colonel Effingham said, "for rain," and Margaret, seated on a fragment of stone, shivered as she drew her shawl around her. Brian had

strolled away—he never rested when a height was to the fore to climb-until he had attained to a more exalted summit than had, to the best of his belief, been trodden by human feet before. For a short while the young wife watched, not exactly anxiously, but yet with some slight misgivings, his upward progress, and then, her thoughts wandering away to less material objects, she rested her chin upon her ungloved hand, and endeavoured to call back visions of the peopled past. Amidst "the wreck of days departed" there rose, first and foremost, the memory of the inspired poet who—

"When the sorrowing gale Waked in those ruins grey its everlasting wail,"

gave birth (if history lies not), whilst reclining on one of the highest remaining portions of the grand old wall, to more than one of those exquisite stanzas which stamp him as being, "whether spirit of light or goblin damned" deponent sayeth not; but in any case as different from the world of men as is the skylark—brightest spirit—which "never was a bird," from the sparrows and chaffinches that twitter their wood-notes wild, so far beneath its soaring pinions.

Dreamily pondering on the respective fates of the two gifted mortals the records of whose farewells to Life and Sorrow lie in Rome, so near and yet so strangely far from one another, Madge finds herself wishing vaguely that she were rich, in order, she tells herself, that the very little that can possibly be left existent of "the unfortunate young English poet's dust," may be removed from the desolate spot in which it lies to some chosen spot near the tomb of his unbelieving friend. It is so mean, she tells herself, of the English residents at Rome not to pay this tardy tribute to his memory, but, as she looks around, and takes the lesson to herself that the very highest and solidest of tombsthe Pyramids to wit, and that of Cecilia Metella,—can render immortal the memory of none, the thought occurred to her that a Christian life and a record of good deeds, is, after all, the best embalmment, and that a forgiving spirit would have better befitted poor young Keats' exit from this disappointing world than the words which we read upon his self-chosen tombstone.

THIS GRAVE

Contains all that was mortal of

An unfortunate young English Poet,

Who,

On his death-bed,

In the bitterness of his heart

At the malicious power of his enemies,

Desired

That these words might be placed Upon his grave:

"Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

Margaret has arrived at this stage in her lucubrations when she is startled with a shout—one which approaches very nearly to a view halloo—from amongst the ruins above, and glancing upwards she sees her husband looking down upon her from the very spot where, but a moment before, she had pictured to herself the poet of all time drawing from the deep wells of the past "thick-coming fancies," wild imaginings, forming themselves then and there into lines of beauty

"Not understood By all, but which the wise, and great, and good Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel."

"Now then, time to be going!" shouts the material Brian from his tottering eyrie, and Margaret startled, and for a moment as thoroughly bewildered as if she had realized another presence, rises from her seat, and by waving her handkerchief, and an acquiescent nod of her head, evinces her readiness to do the bidding of her autocrat.

"Jolly big place it must have been, and uncommon good larks they must have had there," is Colonel Effingham's remark, as he walks with Margaret towards the gate where their carriage awaits them. "I don't see much fun in ruins myself, but everyone to his taste. A casa"—to the coachman—"so that's done and twaddled over; to-morrow, Dieu merci, we shall be in Florence."

Poor Margaret! It was a repetition, and a stinging one, of her Paris experience. Again, even as had been the case with her in Marie Antoinette's suggestive prison, the truth that, in her husband's material nature, sentiment, and reverence for the deeply-interesting Past had no place, was painfully, and, as I have just said, stingingly brought home to her. Would Time and habit ever reconcile her to the evil of being thus "mismatched"? To this question Time alone could answer.

CHAPTER XVII.

"HE WILL KILL HER AT LAST."

IT was an "early spring" in England—so early and genial that the ordinary rigour of May was reduced to an almost minimum, and that the budding leaves, tempted into fulness by the "ethereal mildness" of March," were not condemned, by biting wind and cutting frost, to suffer for their rashness. At Oakden nature has put on her loveliest garb; over the hawthorn-trees—pink as well as white—there is a perfect sheet of blossom, and the air is heavy with the fragrance which is wafted, not only from the "May," but from the laurel bushes, which are throwing up in

countless numbers their spiky flower treasures.

Mrs. Barham, who has just been awakened, by the coming of the "second post," from an afternoon siesta, complains (a rather heavy afternoon luncheon not being by her taken into account) of the narcotic effects of the laurel blossoms.

"I never will believe that so many can be healthy near a house," she says, "but your father likes them,"—with a resigned sigh—" so of course they must remain."

This remark is addressed to her daughter Isabel, who, taking advantage of Mr. Barham's temporary absence, has arrived, with her twin girls, active little creatures of some two years old, to spend a long afternoon in her former home. Now Mrs. Barham, though a mother and a grandmother, is not by any means fond of children. They are very well—she has been known to say—in their "proper place," the which place is certainly, she thinks, not the

drawing-room, and, as for finding baby conversation for the troublesome little things, she has, she avows, neither the intellect for, nor the spirits to attempt it.

Anything she could do for them she of course would, and the number of socks which she knitted, and the yards of flannel that she converted into useful garments for the little Forrests, it would be difficult to reckon up. She is, in truth, very sorry for poor Belle, whose quiver is so inconveniently full, and who, though after quite another fashion, lacks the blessings of peace almost as greatly as does Margaret; but then Mrs. Barham is certainly of opinion that Belle's management of her children is defective, and that, if she had but the "giftie" to see their faults a little more plainly, the task of controlling them might be rendered more easy.

She (Mrs. Barham) has just opened a letter from Madge, but, in consequence of the uproar which little Meg and Kate are keeping up amongst the chairs and tables, to read, or rather to make sense of, Mrs. Effingham's welcome epistle is beyond her mother's powers. For a time she struggles with her difficulty, but at last says, despairingly,

"My dear, if I am to read your sister's letter, I must really have a little quiet. What with the laurels and the children, and a word which I have here and there caught sight of——"

"Oh! mother, why did you not speak before? I know how tiresome children are when you are not used to them, but I was not sure that Soden had done her tea." Soden is the nurse, of whom Mrs. Forrest lives in a state of chronic fear. She is not sure of the woman's temper, and oh! if she were to slap the children——!

Mrs. Barham cuts the matter short by ringing the bell.

"I am afraid you are a slave to your servants, Isabel," she says. "Not done her tea, indeed! Thomas," to the footyouth—for man he is not—who enters in
answer to the bell, "tell Mrs. Soden to
come directly for the children. Good-bye,
my dears. There, that will do," as two
extremely moist kisses are—agreeably to
general orders—pressed upon her cheeks.
"And now, Belle, if you are inclined to
listen, I will read you poor Margaret's
letter."

"Poor" Margaret indeed! Why, if there was one person in the world whom Belle could by any possibility envy it would be her sister Madge. For Isabel, little as she has said about them, has had her longings, and of these one of the keenest has been to see, as Madge is now doing, the various countries of the earth. To travel, in short,

"Amongst unknown men, in lands beyond the sea," and look upon more wonders both of God and man's creation than are to be seen in a country village at home, would, she

imagines, have been for her a foretaste of heaven.

"Poor" Margaret! Ah, well! the day may come when Isabel will realize the truth that it is not always those who seem to have their heart's desire that are in reality the happiest. There is a dessous des cartes, could we but know it, in all the "hands" of cards we hold; and, after all, the "rusting out," at which so many in their hearts rebel, may be at least a safer fate than that which we, in our ignorance of the future, have envied.

"Madge is not ill, I hope?" Isabel asks, softly. "Ah, that would be sad! Away from us! And all her pleasure spoilt!"

The younger woman, overtaxed with household cares, and with the anxieties attendant on a limited income, on which there seems to her to be for ever coming unlimited demands, seats herself on the sofa by her mother's side, and prepares (albeit her heart is greatly with the little

ones, on whose innocent heads Mrs. Soden may be pouring forth a drop or two from the vials which contain her wrath) to listen to her sister's "news"—news which, on the whole, were not, as Mrs. Barham said, "at all comfortable" as regarded the writer thereof, for it was evident that since Madge's last letter (one which had been addressed to Miss de Beauvoir, and had only in part been allowed to meet the eyes of the rest of the family) Mrs. Effingham had gone through more than one "stormy experience" of life. She had ill, too-a circumstance which. been though she endeavoured to make light of it, had detained, and was still detaining, the travellers in Switzerland.

"The truth is," Madge wrote, "that none of the Passes were, at the time we crossed the Alps, considered to be in a proper condition for the attempt. It was —as the experienced people, and officials, all told Brian—both too early and too

late to go forward without both danger and inconvenience; but-you know how brave he is, and how he hates being what is called 'beaten'-go he would, and our expedition was one which I am not very likely ever to forget. The ascent, though trying enough, was achieved without much annoyance; but, when we neared the summit, I, partly owing, I suppose, to my state of health, became lost-in the cold, rarefied air—to all sensation but that of abject and bewildering fear. We had single sledges, I know not why, for the descent— I in one, Morgan in another, and Brian and Matteo in a third and fourth. The pace we rattled down the frozen and trackless sides of old Mont Cenis was literally awful. Three times was I thrown out of my vehicle, and the others made afterwards nearly similar complaints. However, we reached to near the bottom at last, and right glad was I when the slushy and visible road compelled the change from

sledging to a slower and safer method of progression. But imagine my dismay when it was found that, owing to no carriage of any kind being able to make its way to the terminus which we had so toiled to reach, the rest of the route must be continued on horseback!

"It really was hard. Something more, I think, than a mere crumpled rose-leaf; for fatigue and knocking about had done its work, and to mount upon a big, hairylegged cart-horse, with my aching back unsupported, and obliged, as Brian said —for the saddle was a male one—to 'hold on by my eyelids,' was, as I think you will own, rather an aggravation to my wrongs and trials. You must not, however, dear mother, be uneasy about me. When at last we reached our destination, I was quite capable of appreciating, not only the cleanliness of the bed-room which Mattee had secured for me at the hotel, but the delicious cream and butter which Morgan brought me with my tea. I had, of course, to go to bed, and to keep quiet, which, if I do, the little Swiss doctor (he is a wonderful-looking old fellow, with a forehead which reaches to the collar of his coat) says that I shall not come to grief.

"I most sincerely hope not. To be kept by illness in this little, dull frontier town would be, especially to Brian, too trying, so, directly the thing is feasible, I shall endeavour—as Mrs. Dombey did not—to "make an effort." As it is, I am rather proud of myself in that I gave no trouble. I neither (I suppose, because to do either is not in my nature) shrieked or fainted.

"Brian ought to have been pleased that my company was to him no source of worry or annoyance, and the way that, by the side of my lumbering horse, he trudged along, laughing and joking, was a proof that he, at least, was pleased.

"You may not think it, mother, but no one, when he likes, or rather, when the spirit moves him, can be so delightful as my husband. How glad I felt that I had not worried him on the road! I could not help being ill afterwards, and he knew that, and was very, very sorry for me."

"He will end by killing her, I know that," Mrs. Barham, in the bitterness of her indignation, says. "Kind to her? Well he might be, after bringing her to Death's door through his selfish wicked-How would you like such a husband as that. Belle? A man who was warned of the danger, who knew to what he was exposing a delicate creature like Madge, and who, from sheer wilfulness, and a determination to have his own way, and to show that, if other travellers were frightened from going over the mountain, he was not-persisted till he put her-poor darling-in peril of her life."

Isabel is silent. She is feeling very thankful that Margaret can say that she is all but well again. But, not being quite the "poor creature" that some of her father's house have generally considered her, she is decidedly of opinion that Madge ought to have "spoken up" for herself. To do otherwise was not-in Belle's opinion-to give Brian a proper chance. He might not know-Mr. Forrest certainly never had, in her case, kept his eyes wide open-whether his wife was, or was not, in a condition to bear fatigue. And then Belle's thoughts wandered away to times and seasons when her husband, good, kind man though he was, had seemed so utterly unconcerned about her health that she had made a mental threat to let him know what "fussy," selfish women were, and how grateful he ought to be that his lines were cast in pleasanter places than are those of men whose wives think only of There is a proverb which themselves. saith that "threatened men live long," and verily it seemed that John Forrest was

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likely to live long enough, if he waited till sweet-tempered, right-minded Isabel would put her menace into effect.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SICK AT HEART.

"MUST you!—of course you must—
the idea of your making a doubt
about it! My mother never orders the
carriage till half-past three, so we can
be back in time to see the agent about
Greycliffe Hall—not that you need go——"

"Oh, please let me," Margaret hurriedly puts in, for the house alluded to by Brian is one which he is thinking of renting, and she not unnaturally wishes to have what is vulgarly called "a finger in the pie"— "please let me; I should like to see the photograph of it."

"Oh, photographs never tell you any-

thing, either about people or things," rejoins Colonel Effingham, who has seen the work of art in question, and has failed to be especially struck by the appearance of the building it represents. Were it not that attached to Greycliffe Hall there happens to be a good amount of tolerable shooting and fishing, the chances are that Brian, disgusted with a certain square and naked appearance which the unpicturesque stone edifice displays, would, on seeing it, have given up all idea of becoming the lessee of It is situated on the East coast, the Hall. and is within a quarter of a mile, as the crow flies, of the sea. To all appearance perfectly unsheltered, the house stands high above the ocean's level, and on the summit of the jagged cliff from which only the most adventurous spirits can find their way to the beach below.

"Uncommon healthy spot, sir," the foreman of Messrs. Digges and Flagwort had, when displaying the photo., said to their visitor—"stands high, drainage excellent. The late Sir 'Enry laid out a lot of money on the place."

"And he might have laid out a lot more without being able to make it anything but what it is—a beastly, cold-looking, bare, miserable hole," retorts Brian, who, on principle, as he is in the habit of telling Margaret, always runs down, and that without mercy, anything which is offered to him for sale.

"Well, sir," says the obsequious clerk, "I must say that a little more verdure—say ivy, now, or a neat conservatory—would improve the outside look. In the interior there is, I believe, nothing to desire—size, loftiness, elegance of decoration—a place, I may say, to receive a Duchess in; and then the shooting—"

"Ah, you may talk of that; it is more to the purpose than humbugging about Duchesses," says Brian, the which speech, being interpreted, means that, provided there is "sport" for him, and occupation for his leisure hours in seeing that the gamekeepers do their duty, and the night watchmen keep the river pirates off, it matters nothing if Margaret, neighbourless, solitary, and sad, should be left throughout the long, long days (and possibly far into the darkened hours) without a voice to cheer, or human face to smile upon, her solitude.

It is the memory of that photograph—a grim likeness of what is possibly a grimmer original—which decides Brian against allowing Margaret to accompany him to Queen's Square. "She will take a dislike to the place," he says to himself; "and then that old bore, Miss de Beauvoir, will think she has a right to interfere. Better by far not to let them know anything about it till the lease is signed," and, in furtherance of this plan, he (being of the number of those who think it no harm to, in small as well as great things, deceive a woman)

informed Margaret that he had just recollected an engagement which would oblige him to be off, after seeing his people, to quite another part of the town. Another day would do for Digges and Flagwort. The house would not run away, and in the meantime she had better make herself ready for the visit to Green's Hotel.

"You needn't make too much of a swell of yourself," he adds. "I hope the girls—as they call themselves—will be out. There are no such nuisances anywhere. Frances, who goes in for being good, and all that sort of thing, is the best of the two. Pauline is simply detestable."

"'Mais elle n'a que ce defaut là,' I hope," Margaret, quoting Tallyrand's famous addendum, laughingly says; but Brian, who happens not to have heard the anecdote, does not enter into the jeu d'esprit, and, instead, continues to prepare her for the ordeal which lies before her.

"You will think my mother stiff at first,

I daresay," he remarks, "but it is only her manner, and you will soon get used to it. My father is the best old fellow in the world, but he is at Hartswell, and Nettie always stops in the country when he chooses to remain there. Rather hard upon her, when the rest are all enjoying themselves. The girls—dear creatures!—are, of course, very glad that she is not in London."

After laying before her this dreary sketch of her new connections, Brian takes up the copy of a "daily paper" which the German waiter belonging to their hotel has just deposited on the table, and Margaret, accepting the hint, leaves him to such amusement as the pages of a well-conducted journal are tolerably certain to afford.

Her own heart sinks within her as she mentally dwells upon the presentation which she is so shortly—unless a miracle were to take place in her behalf—to undergo. Little conversant as she is with the rules and regulations of social life, she is, nevertheless, all but certain that, both as a bride and a newly-made daughter-in-law, she (Margaret) has a right to expect from Lady Brentwood the attention of a visit. To "either stand upon ceremony," or to be, as the saying is, "up in the stirrups," in defence of her own dignity, is, however, so contrary to young Mrs. Effingham's character and moods of mind that, but for correlative circumstances, she would never have dwelt upon the suspicion that Lady Brentwood was behaving towards her with a lack of the "common" courtesy which she had a right to expect. Putting two and two together is not always a sum in arithmetic which is either an agreeable or profitable occupation, and, when it is a case of desiring to arrive at the proximate amount of affronts given, the numerical effort had better-in nine cases out of ten —be left altogether unattempted.

. It is singular—considering how extremely unpleasant a thing personal mortification is—that on no subjects are sensitive persons more apt to dwell (and, dwelling on, to exaggerate) than on the affronts, real or imagined, which from their fellowbeings they have received. And it is thus with Margaret Effingham. In vain has she fought against the sense of injury which the conduct of her husband's relations has so long caused her to undergo. She has accused herself of morbid pride, over-sensitiveness, and, worst offence of all, of a suspicion which will for ever keep recurring to her mind that Brian had failed to play the entirely loyal part, as regards herself, which should have been his, in this (to her) important matter; but still, in her inmost mind, she harps on the matter.

From motives of delicacy towards him, motives which by many will probably be considered overstrained, she had never divulged to him the true cause of her acceptance of him as a husband. Totally ignorant is he of the fact that, owing to her brave act of self-devotion, the world had been so busy with her name that but one safe step was left to her, the step to which, in fear and trembling, she had recourse.

It may at first sight seem strange, not only that the gossip of society and of the clubs should not, in this case, have reached Colonel Effingham's ears, but that he should have fondly imagined the possibility of a woman's escape, after she had thus (according to society's opinion) grievously sinned against the laws of propriety and "good taste." But it must be remembered, firstly, that Brian was the centre of his own circle, seeing and hearing little beyond-self-satisfied and selfcontrolled; and secondly, that he was about the last man in the world to whom either his friends or foes would be likely to, on subjects which might prove unpleasant to their auditor, speak their minds.

That Brian should have been anxious to conceal, if it were possible, from the world in general the circumstances attending on his illness in which she had a share, was quite incomprehensible to Margaret. Most men, and especially reserved and proud ones, would be, and are, impatient of obligations incurred by them to a woman. and it was this instinctive knowledge of his character which, more than any other cause, kept Brian's wife from even alluding to the occurrence which, humanly speaking, decided her fate in life. But, she told herself, although it might (and would, she doubted not) greatly anger him if he should ever realize the truth that the mystery which he believed to be intact was, in fact, no mystery, there were, nevertheless, no reasons which ought to have withheld him from revealing the true facts of the case to his family. That he had not so acted Margaret felt well assured. It was not, she said to herself,

within the bounds of possibility that, had Lady Brentwood been cognisant of the truth, she would have closed her mother's heart against the benefactor of her son. And, in lieu of this, in place of warmly taking her to their hearts, what did his people do? Simply treat her with silent contempt, and as though she were a forward, eager-to-be-married girl, who took advantage of Brian's momentary passion to effectually ruin his prospects. Margaret had heard from many quarters that Lady Brentwood, and indeed all his near relations, with the single exception of Nettie, had set their minds—hearts I cannot call them—on his marrying an heiress, and would well understand that the effectual barrier which the office filled by her about his person must ever to the accomplishment of their wishes prove, could not fail to increase the distaste with which they now regarded her.

Margaret took herself very seriously to

task for the shrinking dread with which the near approach of this long-delayed meeting inspired her. Again and again she asked herself what, and who, was Lady Brentwood that she, Margaret Effingham, should, as though in sooth she were troubled with a guilty conscience, tremble and turn pale at the thought of seeing and being judged by her.

Time was, the poor girl believed, when she would have shown herself to be less weak, and when the treatment she had met with would have so aroused her pride that fear could have found no place within her breast; but now—ah! how changed she felt herself to be from the joyous, laughter-loving "Maggie" who would never more (and tears of self-pity welled from her eyes at the thought) experience, as she had done in days gone by, that wondrous sensation (a blessing conferred on happy youth alone) of feeling that only to breathe—only to see the blue wide vault

of heaven, and the fresh green of the budding trees, made life a joy. But above, and more than all, was the bitter thought that never more would she feel the deep emotion, the rush and eagerness of Hope, urging the young spirit to be as wildly happy as the joyous sky-bird which

"From Heaven or near it Poureth its full heart In profuse strains of unpremeditated art."

Never—no, never more! And she is not yet twenty, and——"

"Now then! Are you ready? The carriage is at the door; and you can take a biscuit in your hand. Anything better than keeping my mother waiting."

These were the words (spoken in the loud, determined tones which always so effectually prevented Margaret from daring to appeal for sympathy to her husband) that roused her from her sad "trance of thought," and did not, as will readily be

conjectured, tend to render the coming interview a subject of less dread than it had been before.

CHAPTER XIX.

LADY BRENTWOOD'S RECEPTION.

"FROM a good heart good manners spring." This saying, read by Margaret long ago (in French, she thinks), keeps recurring to her mind during her short drive from the Grosvenor Hotel to Green Street. From the axiom she, not in vain, endeavours to take comfort. It can hardly be that Lady Brentwood possesses what is called a "bad heart," and, if this be so, surely she will not (and the young wife's pale cheeks flush hotly as the bare possibility of such treatment passes through her mind) be rude to her! She will be cold and hard, perhaps; but she will

behave—well, like a lady, in short—a mode of procedure which Margaret has—seeing that Lady Brentwood will be in her own house—a perfect right to expect and hope for.

The object of her dread is when her announced-alone in the visitors are comfortless-looking Hotel parlour, in which (for it is on the ground-floor, and its sofas and chairs are of blackest, shiniest horsehair) her poverty, and not her will, condemns her-during her very short London season—to take up her quarters. ladyship is not, as her maid would phrase it, in the best of tempers. A mightier lady by far than she had taken upon herself (for where is not vulgar insolence to be found rampant?) to snub the country squire's wife who had had the audacity to remind her, the Countess of Llangollen, that in the days of their youth they had been friends. Relying upon the fact that the now lesser luminary had, in the days when

she was a great Judge's wife and the giver of balls, been enabled to show to Miss Amy Homes (the Countess was née Homes, and had been a nobody in her girlhood) some (by that then obscure young person) gladly accepted civility, Lady Brentwood, deluding herself with the notion that gratitude is something both more and better than "a lively sense of favours to come," suggested, through the medium of a friend, that her daughter, Miss M. Effingham, would be very grateful for an invitation to a ball which in ten days' time was, at Llangollen House, expected to come off. It was a mean thing (such acts always are) to do; but the amount of dirt she had eaten, did not, till she was called upon to digest it, appear to her in anything approaching to It is failure that breeds its true colours. remorse, and, had Lady Brentwood succeeded in her aim, she would never have suffered from the sense of humiliation which was now evidently affecting her temper.



Curiously, and in the most roundabout ways, do the acts and deeds of one individual sometimes affect the well-being and the comfort of another, who, possibly, is not known, even by name, to the unconscious originator of the mischief. In the present case, the "insolence and ingratitude" of Lady Llangollen in refusing the invitation asked for, rebounded upon Margaret, for, as Lady Brentwood, not untruly perhaps, remarked to her daughter, Pauline, "If Brian had not married, she would have been only too glad to know us. Where there is a good-looking only brother, girls can get to as many balls as they like."

Pauline did not remind her mother that, as he neither went to balls, nor knew how to dance, her half-brother's prestige as a useful young man would scarcely, during a London season, be of much advantage to his sisters. She was not especially fond of Brian, and, therefore, saw no reason

why her mother should not, if it gave her pleasure, indulge in the added spice of acrimony, which the notion she had first given voice to, had produced within her breast.

"Oh! so you have come at last," is Lady Brentwood's greeting to her son, as he, without any troublesome display of filial emotion, kisses her well-preserved cheek. She has not risen on the entrance of her visitors, and a cold touch of her well-ringed fingers is all the notice which to Margaret she vouchsafes.

"We are dreadfully lodged here," is her first remark, directed exclusively to her son. As regards Margaret's presence, she seems so determined to entirely ignore it that, as the former sits mute and unnoticed on her chair, the poor neglected one almost feels as though she had, by some strange miracle, a leaf about her person of the fairy fern, which is said to render those who wear it invisible to mortal eyes.

"I declare," continues her ladyship, who is too entirely engrossed with her own wrongs and grievances for the interests of others to, in the very least degree, occupy her attention-"I declare that it is too bad of Green. He wrote, in answer to my letter, that he should have a good first-floor sittingroom for me yesterday, and when I arrive this is the place they put me into! Of course he says that it is not his fault. The people upstairs (a Countess, of course, only I don't believe a word persons of that sort say) had promised to go, and had a telegram-I wish there were no such things -that some one was to come from India -some nephew or other-and that she must stay a day in town to see him. you ever, in all your life, hear such nonsense?"

"Never. The fellow, whoever he is, ought to have stayed away. There is no doubt about that," gravely replies Brian, while Lady Brentwood, in happy ignorance

Pain . .

of any sarcasm being intended, continues to dilate upon the multifarious evils to which she is being subjected.

"The rent we shall have to pay here is something horrible," she says, fretfully. "I declare, if it wasn't for the lifts, I would go to the Palace or the Grosvenor. By the way, what do they charge for the fourth or fifth story rooms at those places?"

"Haven't an idea," Colonel Effingham, caressing his long moustache, replies. He is not in the least afraid of his mother, and rather enjoys what he calls riling her by a display of carelessness, as regards his expenditure and money matters generally, which is, in truth, a salient and very unfortunate feature in his character.

"Not an idea? Good gracious! You cannot mean to say that you have engaged rooms—bed-rooms, I suppose they are,—without asking what the charge for them is?"

Brian, who is sitting with his face turned towards the comfortless sofa on which his parent is holding forth upon her woes, smiles provokingly, twirling his hat upon his stick the while, as he rejoins, placidly,

"Well, I did ask—not about the garrets, though. We hate lifts; don't we, Madge?" looking round at his wife, whose sweet face suddenly brightens up at his unexpected question. He does not, however, wait for her reply, but, bent upon mild teasing, says, "To the best of my memory—but then, I never can keep that sort of thing in my head—we pay thirty shillings a day for our four rooms. Is that more than they ask you here?"

Lady Brentwood is furious; she has, from the first moment that she heard her name, so thoroughly disliked and looked down upon her son's wife that the idea of that intruder occupying apartments in an Hotel, for which a higher price is demanded than she (Lady Brentwood) can afford to

pay for hers, is gall and wormwood to the prejudiced and angry woman. For a few moments she is too much taken aback for speech, and then she says, ironically, her cold, hard eyes fixed the while upon Margaret's mobile face,

"You are fortunate in having so much money to throw away; and, may I ask, is that your own carriage?" severely inspecting (as it stood facing the window) the landau hired for the day, which had conveyed Brian and his wife to her august presence.

"God forbid!" exclaims Colonel Effingham, starting from his seat and moving towards the window. "Why, mother, what can be the matter with your eyeglass that you could imagine I should ever own such a turn out as that? I say, Madge, look here. Did you ever see such legs as that brute has got? The other has been a good 'un in his day; but how my mother could"—(this to Margaret, as she stands by his side looking through the window which he has incontinently thrown open)—"imagine that I, of all men in the world, could own such brutes, passes my comprehension."

Margaret laughs softly; she feels less in a false position standing there with Brian by her side, and appealing (it might almost be said) to her for corroboration of his opinion, than she did when seated on that out-of-the-circle chair, unnoticed, and virtually ignored. She is about to speak, when Lady Brentwood, in a voice cold and incisive as well-polished steel, enunciates words which check the response upon her lips.

"If Mrs. Brian Effingham finds it necessary, my dear boy, to have the windows open when the wind is in the east, perhaps she will oblige us by doing so elsewhere; I like air as much as most people, but my neuralgia prevents my finding it possible to give in to everyone's fancies about cold, and no cold, and that sort of thing."

Margaret, utterly unaccustomed as she is to incivility and underbred rudeness of any kind, finds herself before this attack simply dumb. At a war of words, seeing that it is contrary to her nature to be violent and unmannerly, she would have been "nowhere;" moreover, in presence of one whom she feels to be—because ungentle—in some sort an "unsexed" woman, Margaret almost trembles, and great is her relief when Brian, who has hastily closed the window, suggests that "time is up, and that they had better be going."

Drawing a long breath of relief, as he seats himself by Margaret in the carriage, Colonel Effingham says, fiercely—

"So that is over, and a good job too. I shall bring Nettie to the Grosvenor this afternoon. I am going to the riding-school now, where my mother will make her have lessons. Such humbug! She ought to have begun as a child, and then she could sit anything, as you do."

Pleased by praise, which is rare to her now, and yearning, as only the starving can do, for sympathy and tenderness, Margaret lays her small hand timidly upon her husband's, and says, impulsively,

"I shall be glad to see Nettie—very glad; but, Brian, need I ever go again to Lady Brentwood's? She was so——"

"So what?" drawing his hand away, not unkindly, for he has not even noticed that hers rested upon his, but brusquely, and for the simple reason that he, too, is annoyed and angered by his mother's behaviour to his wife. This feeling he does not choose to make apparent, and, therefore, he pretends to Margaret that he does not understand what has happened to vex her. "I warned you," he continues, excitedly, "that my mother was an awkward customer to deal with, and of course, if you look, as you did all the time, as if you were afraid she would eat you, it doesn't mend matters. What possessed you,"

working himself up into a positive rage, "to behave as you did?"

"I didn't behave at all," Margaret, plucking up at last something approaching to "a spirit," says. "Your mother did not give me a chance of what you call behaving, and, Brian, I never will—no, never, if I can help it—see Lady Brentwood again."

"But you can't help it. Don't be a fool, and don't, for God's sake, begin" (for unshed tears had sprung to Madge's eyes) "to howl. Hullo! coachman, stop! I'm getting out here;" and, suiting the action to the word. Colonel Effingham opens the door, springs from the carriage, and is out of sight round a street corner before his wife can actually realize the fact that he has left her.

CHAPTER XX.

MARGARET HAS NO CHOICE.

"SO you have been in India! Such a long way off, and I never to have known it! You might have told me—such good friends as we have always been, Alan—and then I should have been able to imagine you in those wonderful faraway countries."

"You had reality—a reality which, I hope, was far better worth than any imaginings in which I could have borne a part," interposes Alan Carruthers, who had arrived two days before from India, and has now come, the bearer of the kindest and most courteous of notes from his

aunt, the Dowager Lady Dartford, to Mrs. Effingham.

"I knew your mother and your grandmother well," wrote the invalid occupant
of "Green's" first-floor drawing-room,
"and if you will kindly excuse an old woman's inability to leave—during this cold
wind—her room, it would give me very
sincere pleasure to make the acquaintance
of one of whom my dear nephew thinks, I
know, so highly."

"What a dear old lady she must be!" Margaret, after reading the note, and listening to some pleasant remarks from Alan Carruthers regarding his relative, remarked; and then they began, though not exactly with the old gusto—the pleasant, untrammelled spirit of former days—to speak of other matters.

"You possessed reality," Carruthers had said, and, though his voice did not falter as it slightly lingered on the word, it would have been possible for an acute observer (and especially so for one who felt in him a deeper interest than falls to the lot of "only" friends to inspire) to detect a something in his tone which told of feelings crushed but not subdued, and ready, like a fire only half extinct, and smouldering underneath, to break forth again with dangerous fury.

"But what was your purpose in going to the East?" Margaret asks again. "Was it to gather wisdom, or to run away from thought? To study Eastern languages, or to find out for yourself whether all the efforts that have been made have ever succeeded in altogether persuading one Hindoo or one Mussulman to be a Christian. I met a man in Rome who—"

"Forgive me," Alan, with his well-remembered, serious smile, breaks in. "You shall tell me of your man in Rome some other time. To-day I want to ask you about yourself. Are you happy? Has everything gone well with you? Have I

—God grant it—been a false prophet?" And, as he asks these rapidly-succeeding questions, there is such a depth of concentrated feeling in his deep-set eyes that Margaret, for the first time, lowers her own under his searching gaze.

He sees his mistake, and hastens to remedy it.

"Pardon me," he says, more calmly, "for doing so unconventional a thing as to put a home question. I have been living a good deal alone, and broodingly, which must be my excuse; and, besides, I fancied—I trust it is only fancy—that you are changed—that you are not the same Madge who always seemed to me like a living embodiment of spring. There is a look of care upon your face."

"Which will be all gone when I have been to Oakden, and seen dear mother, and Cousin Susan, and Canny Kate. But, oh! Alan, I must tell you some good news! Colonel Effingham is going to buy Canny Kate of papa, and she will be brought to Greycliffe."

"To Greycliffe, near Blue Rock?" interrupts Alan again. "Why, what can she be going there for?"

"For me to ride, and perhaps drive, and certainly make much of. Ah! you do not know—you cannot guess, Alan, how dearly I love my mare. She will be my greatest comfort at Greycliffe. The one thing——But, no, I will not say that—but she will talk to me of home, and I shall answer her, and—and I shall not feel lonely then."

She passes her hand lightly over her eyes, and makes a brave effort to conquer and conceal the truth that the prospect before her mind's eye is not a smiling one. Alan Carruthers allows her time to master her emotion, and then says,

"From what you tell me, I conclude that Greycliffe is going to be your home. Is this the case, or have I jumped too hastily at a conclusion?"

"Not at all too hastily. We are going to live at the place which most people who know it tell me is simply odious. If this be so, I must—as I know you will say to me—bear it as best I can. Well, is not that what your advice is going to be? Speak, or else——"

"For ever after hold my tongue. Is that what you were about to add? Hardly, I think, as these words must infallibly remind you of the only occasion on which I was bold enough to offer you advice."

"Advice which I did not, because I could not, take; but never mind that now. Tell me about Greycliffe. I feel sure, from your looks, and from your manner of speaking of it, that you know something of the place. So now begin! begin! and don't, please, make it out better than it is. Remember that in less than a fortnight I shall be able to judge for myself what there is, either of pleasure or of pain, before me."

Alan Carruthers leans back in his chair, a still more thoughtful and saddened expression than before Margaret's last words had been spoken, resting on his face.

"Poor child!" he says to himself. "And she can—after the experience which her looks plainly reveal that she has gone through—talk of being able to estimate for herself the relative amount of joy and grief which it may be her lot to undergo! And she wants me to describe to her her future home! 'The Ruffian' has, however, apparently settled the matter without consulting her, and, if so——"

His reverie, which has not lasted more than half a minute, is broken in upon by Margaret, who, with pretty absolutism, says,

"I shall leave off believing in you altogether, if you take so long to think. But, in the meantime, please to answer my questions exactly as I put them. In the first place, who is the nearest neighbour I shall have at Greycliffe?"

- "A bachelor parson, who lives eight miles off among the hills, and is given to tippling."
 - "Good. And beyond him?"
- "None, that I am aware of, till you come to Belford, eighteen miles away, and then, 'the family,' rich people of the name of Chambers, are only resident some few weeks in the year. They come for grouse-shooting, which, though bad, satisfies cubs like them."
- "So my amusements will consist of receiving occasionally a drunken parson, who cannot too seldom honour me with his visits, and of, possibly, an occasional call from some—cubs, did you call them? who, as their house is eighteen miles away, will, probably, not often show us the light of their countenances. And now comes my second question: Is the country pretty? Are there nice rides and drives?"

Mr. Carruthers shakes his head.

"Alas!" he says, "I can, as to that, give

you no great encouragement. The drive from Bodner, your nearest town, is (I speak of the last nine miles of country, which entirely consists of rock, and mountain, and moorland) a kind of defile, bleak, wild of aspect, and uninhabited, save by a few peasants, whose wretched cottages are scattered here and there on either side of the road."

"A road which, as I have been told, leads only, barring the cottages, to Greycliffe and the sea?"

"Precisely. And now, dear Mrs. Effing-ham, having given you as much unpleasant information as lies in my power to bestow, perhaps you, in your turn, will tell me how it came about that you, Margaret Barham, who used, I thought, to have a will of your own, permitted (you having never even seen the house) the choice of your future home to be decided on without your consent?"

Margaret is silent. A feeling of loyalty

towards her husband prevents her owning the truth; namely, that, not having been consulted in this, to her, decidedly important matter, she had not been able to summon to her aid the amount of courage necessary for even the mildest assertion of her wifely prerogative. Happily, she is saved the necessity of answering by the entrance, with his usual appearance of haste and briskness, of Brian himself. He and Alan Carruthers had already, in the entrance-hall of Green's hotel, shaken hands in greeting, and the former had been amused to find that the "nephew," regarding whose advent from India he (Brian) had spoken so cavalierly, was no other than his old acquaintance. It was at the Colonel's request that Alan had come to "The Grosvenor," where, as he assured the returned traveller, Mrs. Effingham would be delighted to see him. Which in truth she was, and said so openly, for Madge had never been the least "in love"

with Alan Carruthers, and could, therefore, hear without any suggestive emotion, that they two were about, after long months, to meet again.

CHAPTER XXI.

DEATH IN LIFE.

ONE of Margaret's first objects, after arriving in London, was to visit her old friend in York Street. Mrs. Cowper, never a good correspondent, had been longer than usual without giving signs of life, and it was consequently not without a feeling akin to uneasiness that Madge rang at the bell. To her inquiry of whether Mrs. Cowper were at home, an answer was given in the affirmative, and the visitor was ushered by a "general servant," with whose face she was not familiar, into the well-known parlour, where, in her accustomed seat by the

window, sat the lonely widow. The visit was one for which the latter had been, as Mrs. Carruthers thought, duly prepared, and therefore it was with a startled sense of some evil thing impending that Margaret found no voice raised in welcome, and no hand extended to meet her own. Nearer she came, and then, her heart beating with painful quickness, her eyes met the stony stare of one unconscious, and the melancholy truth that mind (though life still lingered in the frail earthly body) "was wanting there" flashed into her mind. To her tender words of greeting no answer came, and the dull gaze of idiotcy, which replaced the look of keen intelligence that had formerly been characteristic of the still attractive face, was almost more than she could bear to witness.

Her first impulse was to ring the bell, which (when Mrs. Gream caught sound of) she, expecting the summons, hastened to answer. By that time Mrs. Effingham

was kneeling beside her friend, and tenderly pressing between her own warm palms the stricken woman's shaking fingers.

"What dreadful thing has happened, Mrs. Gream? She cannot speak to me. Oh, dear friend—dear friend!" Madge, with a sudden burst of weeping, exclaims; and then, with an effort to be calm, she rises from her knees, and says a courteous, "How do you do?" to her old acquaintance.

Mrs. Gream, with (apparently) the same black net cap upon her head which graced that member many months before, and with her arms crossed, in an attitude indicative of pensive submission to a higher Power, upon her bony breast, heaves a sigh before she responds to this appeal.

"Oh, miss—ma'am—I beg your pardon, but a wrong word will slip out sometimes —it's a sad thing to see that poor lady now. So clear as she used to be in her intellecks, and now, would you believe it, 'm, there are days and days when she doesn't know—I was a-going to say B from a bull's foot, but it's better to put it this way—when she doesn't know me from my 'usband, nor Fanny from his Lordship, as comes here so often to look after her."

"But is she always like this?" Margaret asked, anxiously. She has turned away her face (down which tears are now fast streaming) from the drawn, expressionless features, the sight of which is almost more than she can bear. "Has she had—" (this in a whisper, as if the poor soul could hear, or, if hearing, feel alarmed at mention of that word of dread)—"has she had a stroke? What does the doctor say? Not that she will be always so? Oh, no; that would be too terrible," and Margaret, feeling in her inmost heart that Death

would be far less regrettable than a death in life like this, waits breathlessly for Mrs. Gream's reply.

"Well, 'm, as to a stroke, or not a stroke, there seems to be no telling. The doctor, he shilly shally's—can't be certain—may have had something like one in her sleep. Fact is, 'm, it's all guess-work with them gen'lemen, or near upon it, and they won't, and you can't make 'em, which is more, give an opinion. They likes to leave things so as, either way it may turn out, they can't be wrong."

"But you have not told me," Margaret says, impatiently, "when she was first taken ill, and whether she is always the same as she seems now."

"Well, then, there ain't much difference as I can see. She is getting childish-like, which she ain't at that time of life when such a dispensation may come nat'ral, and be expected like. It was the day after his Lordship called, and she was as well that

day as ever I saw her, and my lord he laughed, I recollect, and told her that, if he had to go out fighting again, she must come to take care of him. As goodlooking a woman she was that day for fifty-five, considering 'er 'ealth and the little nourishment she took, as one would wish to see."

"And that is—how long ago?" asked Margaret, a little consciously, for the which a still small voice within did not fail to sorely prick her; she was only aware that, had not the two events—that of Lord Walter's return, and the sudden alteration in Mrs. Cowper's mental state—been intimately connected with one another, the question which she had just, with a slightly accelerated pulse, put to worthy Mrs. Gream might never have been asked at all.

"How long is it?" muses the landlady. "Well, my memory's grown that bad, what with the lodgers coming and going,

and the children always a-wanting something, that I can't just remember. Fanny would know, I daresay," and, throwing open the door, she calls at the top of her voice to that lively and wide-awake demoiselle—

"Fanny, what was the day as his Lordship called? We 'ad a stuffed 'eart for dinner, and——"

But at the moment when the careful housewife is endeavouring, by means of a well-recollected culinary delicacy, to stimulate her daughter's memory, a chord—of what nature, who can say?—vibrates in the widow's troubled brain, and she says, slowly and indistinctly, and stroking Madge's soft hand the while—

"It's Arthur's birthday; don't forget. There will be apple-fritters for dinner, and cod's head. Arthur always chooses what he'll have, and he'll be home at six. Cod's head and apple-fritters, cod's fritters and

apple heads; he likes them dry. No grease, please, Mrs. Jones," and, with an appealing but strangely vacant look in her wide-open eyes, the poor soul fixes them on the landlady's unmoved face. The latter had caught the last few words, and, being touchy on the score of her gastronomic powers, responds to them briskly.

"Ah, well, it's time you forgot old scores, 'm," she says, addressing (to Margaret's indignation) her lodger, who had now relapsed into her former comatose condition. "You haven't seen no grease since 'ere you've been, and, if your Mrs. Jarnes did use to pisen you with it, it's time, as I said before, that you forgot and forgave as a Christian woman should. Oh! six weeks ago, was it, last Tuesday?"

"Yes; and the last time he came, his Lordship said——"

But here Margaret, distressed by all that was passing, and fearing, she scarcely knew why, to hear anything further of Lord Walter and his proceedings, announces her attention to depart.

"I cannot stay now, but I will come again," she says, "and my father, Mr. Barham, when he knows of this sad change, will, I am sure, do everything he can for my poor aunt. Dear Aunt Arthur!" pressing her lips upon the now wrinkled forehead (for Mrs. Cowper had during the last six weeks become prematurely old) of the afflicted woman. "You will take kind care of her—I know you will," and, as she takes Mrs. Gream's hand in parting, she leaves two sovereigns, all the money that her purse contains, in that experienced housekeeper's not unready fingers. The unexpected gratuity, after Mrs. Effingham's departure, slipped without comment thereupon into the capacious pocket of the recipient, whilst Margaret wends her way along the quiet street towards busier regions, and where a

a pedestrian ran a better chance of being enabled to "hail" a passing cab.

Being, as she is, "only a woman," it is natural that her thoughts should be divided between sorrow for her friend and gladness (for she is made glad, there is no denying that truth) at the news regarding Lord Walter, which she has just listened to. As a true and sympathising friend, and one whose gentleness must ever have for her an exceeding charm, she regards him; but the love which, in spite of the great incompatibility of their respective idiosyncrasies, she is more than beginning to feel for Brian, is her safeguard against any warmer feeling than friendship entering her heart. She will be glad to see him -she tells herself-so glad! and they will talk of dear Mrs. Cowper, and devise schemes for her comfort, and perhaps for finding her another home elsewhere; but of Love there will be, of course, no question.

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But, in the midst of these ponderings, whom should she see approaching but the well-remembered form of Lord Walter himself; he is not alone, for walking, not precisely by his side, but just at the few inches of distance astern which denote a sense of social inferiority, is a young man, who, notwithstanding that his coat is more shabby than of yore, Madge's quick eye recognizes as her fellow-traveller during the ever-memorable railway-carriage mêlée. On catching sight of her, Lord Walter at once stops, and with evident pleasure offers his hand.

"Mrs. Effingham," he exclaims, "this is indeed a delightful surprise!" and more words are about to be said on both sides, when the "shabby genteel" youth, infinitely to the astonishment of his companions, says, abruptly, and while turning his head aside,

"I beg your pardon, but I have just

remembered an appointment, and must hurry away."

He had his handkerchief held to his face as he spoke, and the next moment Margaret and her old acquaintance suddenly found themselves tête-à-tête upon the trottoir.

CHAPTER XXII.

"NO ONE'S ENEMY BUT HIS OWN."

CRD WALTER was not slow to take advantage of Mrs. Effingham's hurried permission to visit her. It was his "way" to be "attentive" to married women, and Margaret, who had been in maiden days only, in his estimation, a "rather pretty girl," became, now that she was under the safeguard of a husband, an object of very decided attraction; not that Lord Walter was drawn towards the "ruffian's" wife by any overweening admiration for her beauty, nor was he the kind of man that is generally regarded as "dangerous." Nature had endowed him

with too "good" a heart for the systematic interfering with the peace of families to be quite in his line. A woman, happy with her husband—let that woman be beautiful as Venus—would be by him left completely and safely alone; but, in cases such as Margaret's, there was a difference. It was a generally admitted fact that no man, and—ex concessu, still more certainly—no woman could have a "good time" of it with Brian Effingham. No special reasons were given for this belief. He was far too thoroughly a gentleman to ill-use his wife: he would neither beat her, nor, possibly, swear at her; occasionally, too, he might, in small things, allow her to have her own way, and yet, notwithstanding these exemptions and privileges, the general—if unexpressed—feeling on the subject was, "God help the woman who is bold enough to become the 'ruffian's' wife!"

Nor was this the only reason why Mrs. Effingham's case was slightly an excep-

tional one; for there existed, what is called in every-day language, an "understanding" between her and him-a slight one, it is true, but, nevertheless, of sufficient importance to (as I said before) place Margaret on a different footing with him from that of other pure young wives of his acquaint-She had permitted him to see, and that in actual words, that all was not summer sunshine between herself and It was a mistake, and a grievous Brian! one on Madge's part, and it came about after this wise. Lord Walter, after the fashion of many of his kind, was given to indulge in the light badinage that is commonly known as "chaff." Being himself a man of even temper, and not easily excited to wrath, the chances, in Margaret's opinion, were that he might, on some unlucky occasion, be tempted, when chatting playfully with Brian, to "poke his fun" a little too unceremoniously at that capricious individual.

Possibly, too, Lord Walter might not only have, but be inclined to hold, an opinion of his own, in which case (if such obstinacy should happen to clash with that of Brian) Margaret well knew that the consequences might be anything but pleasant. So, between smiles and blushes, and with not a little hesitation in her speech, she threw herself—as she laughingly termed it—on Lord Walter's mercy.

"It would be so good of you, whatever Colonel Effingham might say, never to contradict him. You know," she added, a little self-reproachfully, "he has a way of talking rather wildly sometimes." And her interlocutor, who, in common with many another man, knew pretty well what Brian's "wild" talking was, promised—as in duty bound—any and everything she asked of him.

He was, as I have said, not (taking him altogether) a strikingly handsome man, but nature had bestowed upon this pleasant Irishman one of those personal gifts which seldom fail to work their way to women's foolish hearts. And this gift was a peculiarity in his eyes, which, though in itself simply physical, had the effect of stirring the "life-strings of the soul" in many of those who looked upon it.

"Throbbing in sweet and languid beatings there, Like the vague sighings of the wind at even, That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea,"

so woke, at sight of Walter Donovan's halfveiled eyelids, the unconscious first throbs of a passionate and tender nature.

At first their talk was all of the old friend who, as Walter truly said, lived in a fool's paradise now, and was far happier than she had been for years.

"She has forgotten that poor old Arthur died," he said, "and though of course it is terrible to hear her talk to me as if I were he, yet if it does her good, poor thing, why, so much the better, is it not, for her?"

Margaret, grieving though she did for

one whose days on earth, her companion told her, could not be much further prolonged, was fain to own that, in meting out this Judgment, Mercy had been remembered.

"If only, though," she said, "we could take her away to some nice country place. I never feel quite sure of Mrs. Gream, and then she looks so dirty, and talks so vulgarly and loud——"

Lord Walter, who is paying his first visit to Mrs. Effingham at the Grosvenor Hotel, and who, ever since he met Margaret in the street, had been wondering whether or not she has any recollection of the extreme state of impecuniosity which, not so very many months before, had been made no secret of, either to her or to Mrs. Cowper, becomes slightly flushed, as, with his agate-handled cane, he traces lines upon the old mock-roses which grace the carpet.

"There's nothing on earth," he, without raising his head, says, "that I wouldn't do

for Arthur's mother, but I am—as you know—such a penniless poor devil! The scrimmage out there," pointing vaguely in the direction of Southern Africa, "was over sooner than had been expected, and as my old governor was ill, and wanted me home, I had to return, but-however, I won't bother you now about my confounded money troubles, which will drive me mad some day, I think, and a good thing, too, perhaps. Tell me," looking up, and changing the subject abruptly, "did not you think it very strange of that chap who was with me yesterday cutting away as he did? I don't believe that he had an appointment any more than I had, and he was talking as quietly as possible till just before he saw you."

Margaret fully agrees that the occurrence was strange. "Only," she adds, "I am, or ought to have been, accustomed to some such proceedings on his part, for that identical young man behaved last year in much the same unaccountable manner, when I met him in a railway-carriage, and he heard our name."

"Singular—most singular! But everything about the fellow is mysterious. When I knew him first——"

"Yes?" eagerly interrupts Margaret—
"How, and where was it that you came to know him at all? It seems so odd. He is such a poor, shabby-looking creature now, and yet, when I saw him before, he might have been almost, if not quite, taken for a gentleman."

"He wanted to enlist in our Battalion—that was the reason of my seeing him; about three years ago now it is, and he was a good-looking chap then, fresh-coloured and healthy, apparently, but the surgeon couldn't pass him because the sight of one of his eyes was defective, and I shall never forget the poor lad's despair when he found he was not to have the bounty—such a small sum!—which

he had hoped to receive. I was so much struck by his misery, as well as by his way of talking (above a common soldier's, you know, and that kind of thing), that I asked him a few questions about himself, and what he wanted the money so much for; and after a time he told me it was for a sick sister—a girl whom he called Lucy, and who, unless he could obtain a few pounds—just a little, he said—to put some present strength into her frame, must die, and then he, Eustace Follett—and as he spoke the poor boy wept bitterly—would be alone in the wide world."

"Poor fellow! And what did you do for him?" Margaret asks. She has been listening attentively, in the hope that something might transpire which would throw a light upon the young man's singular behaviour regarding herself, but as yet she has listened in vain.

Walter Donovan answers her question by another.

"What," he says, "could such a very hard-up party as I am do in such a case? Collectively, however, we got something for the poor wretch. I am afraid, though, that, but for the beauty of the sister, Mr. Follett would have stood a poor chance of help."

· "You saw the sister, then? How and when was that?"

He, smiling at her eager queries, says, "The how was by means of a photograph which the proud brother drew from a shabby old pocket-book, and the where was in my barrack-room, where only one or two of us were collected together."

"And was the sister so very pretty?"

"As far as we could judge, yes. A mignonne face it seemed, but yet with a good deal of character and determination in it."

"And the brother—what became of him? Do you know, Lord Walter, that, silly as you may think it, I am literally on tenter-hooks till I know something about
—about ourselves and him."

Again Walter Donovan has recourse to the carpet and his cane as a refuge against peering eyes. He has his own suspicions as to the matter regarding which Margaret is so anxious, but, as they are such as he cannot well make known to her, he deems it better to remain—on that score at least, and for the present—silent.

As for Eustace Follett, and the help which was given to him, Lord Walter can, however, and does, speak out quite frankly.

"We got together," he said, "as I think I told you, a few pounds, and sent him on his way rejoicing. The Colonel, too, made inquiries at a big printing office, where the poor beggar had been, he said, employed, and it turned out that, in that matter, he had told the truth. Only he had been turned off for idleness, so there was an end of that. Then I got him a place in Bermuda, half secretary, half

valet, but he did not keep it. There is a screw loose somewhere, I suppose. A roving, half-cracked kind of creature, with one fixed idea, so our doctor—who saw him once in a kind of wandering fit—said, and that idea seemed to be his sister—a lost sister, as far as he could gather—but then, as I suggested, mislaid sisters need not stupefy their brothers' brains."

And this very unsatisfactory solution of the mystery Margaret was obliged, there being no alternative, to accept, but she did so unwillingly, and under protest; her thoughts often, and in spite of herself, reverting to what Lord Walter had said of the well-educated brother, and the pretty sister with whose history his eccentricities were apparently connected.

Meanwhile, never again, during the visits which soon became frequent of Lord Walter to Brian Effingham's wife, was the subject of Eustace Follett renewed. Pecuniary troubles were, at this period,

coming in "battalions," thick and fast, upon the head of the Prodigal, whose day of reckoning had been put off so long. He found himself, when but a very few weeks had, after his return from his short campaign, elapsed, in such overwhelming difficulties that not to seek sympathy from so kind a friend as Mrs. Effingham was impossible to one so weak and unself-And she-Well, what could a reliant. kindly natured woman do, save listen pityingly to woes which, according to the young man's ingenious showing, had their chief origin in the unprincipled cheating of tradespeople, and the grasping rascality of money-lenders who had taken a base advantage of his needs?

He had such a pleasant, manly way of speaking of his abject destitution! Never a whine or groan; and then he would draw such amusing pictures of his detested allies, the Jew and Christian moneylenders, that Madge, till she perceived the

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under-current of bitterness which ran beneath his assumed and almost boyish spirits, would laugh with him, and enjoy (as poor Mrs. Cowper,—now fast sinking into her quiet grave,—had once done) the tricks and circumventions planned by Walter to get the better of the

enemy.

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But there came a time when, neither to the spendthrift nor his friend, those debts of his seemed as a laughing matter. Nearer and nearer came the evil day, the day of reckoning, the day when appearances could no longer be kept up, and when profession, prospects, pride, all alike gone,—vanished,—and extinct, he, Walter Donovan, the idol of the ladies, and the adored by every soldier in his company, must bid adieu for ever to the old life, and return to—to what? Ah, where was his manhood, where his moral courage, where his high-breeding then? for, in a moment of despair, he poured

out his whole soul to Margaret Effingham, telling her that if he could find no friend generous enough to back a bill (it was for four hundred pounds) he would put a pistol to his head that night!

"Misery," so runs the often-quoted truth, "makes us acquainted with strange bed-fellows," and, to my thinking, there are none more strange, and few more pitiable, than the acquaintances which poverty and its attendant shifts make known to us. Very gradually does the idea of doing a mean action creep into a once noble heart, but, as we all know, "familiarity" and "habit" are often fatal things, and the man who can without a sense of degradation open the "dunning" letter of a creditor, is in a fair way, methinks, to feel no shame in anything.

Had habit (the habit of being in a lowered position), and also the extremity of his situation, not told, and that vitally,

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upon Walter Donovan's nature, he would never have brought himself-which, though not without bitter regret, he did-to request Margaret to put her name to the bill for the £400 which, in another six months, would be due. It was in utter ignorance of the responsibility which she undertook that the fatal words were, withmoment's hesitation, out written. Assured by Lord Walter that risk there was none, the trusting woman, moved thereto by his evidently great embarrassment, and, more than all, by her fear (for Walter was no empty talker, and, as a rule, meant what he said) of the fatal act to the possibility of which he had alluded, felt only joy at being able to rescue him from present difficulty; whilst he—well, it was fully his intention to meet the bill he had been promised by his elder brother, whose name was also upon it, that she should never suffer, and, as he had been

offered a Staff appointment in India, he would soon, he said, be able to save money, and pay off every debt he owed.

It was to Margaret's generous and impulsive nature that both Lord Walter and his family were indebted for this act of disinterested kindness, whilst she again, and without a thought or fear of evil to come, had sown the storm, the harvest of which she in after-years, in tears and humiliation, reaped.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MARGARET DRAWS COMPARISONS.

DURING their short stay in London, Margaret saw but little of her husband. Up to his ears, he told her, was he in business, and with scarcely a minute that he could call his own. To do him only justice, it was not on any exclusive pleasures of his own that he expended either his time or money. If he bought a carriage (and Madge soon, and that a little to her dismay, discovered that he had purchased, or rather, I should say, ordered, three), it was not for the purpose of reaping personal convenience or pleasure that he was actuated; but, seeing that of the three

costly vehicles which were speedily despatched to Greycliffe one was a sociable, another a low, beautifully-finished phaeton. and the third a char-à-banc, it was tolerably clear—at least, so said Brian's family that his wife was "at the bottom" of these "unwarrantable acts of extravagance." They did not (on the very few occasions when she came in contact with those whomade no attempt to conceal their dislike and contempt for her) openly accuse her of the grave offence of inducing her husband to live beyond his income; but words were not necessary either to reveal or to conceal from one so quick-witted as Margaret what was passing in their minds. Unfortunately, also, her own open-handed nature. her intense love (due partly to her thorough appreciation of popularity) of giving, tended to increase the preconceived opinion that. if Brian (a result which was freely prognosticated) came to grief, it would be tothat "horrid girl's" love of fine clothes.

and fine carriages that must be traced his ruin.

To a proud and independent spirit such treatment as this—such evident intention of wounding her-was very hard to bear. It was in vain she told herself that those who thus conducted themselves were unworthy of her anger. Really well-bred people were not, in their own houses, in the habit of treating their guests with studied rudeness and systematic impertinence. From Eastern "savages" these well-to-do men and women might, she told herself, in this respect, take a lesson in good behaviour, and learn to be civil to those who were compelled (as was sometimes almost literally Madge's case) to "eat their salt," and to endure the penance of their society.

It was with her heart full of these thoughts that she journeyed alone to Oakden. Brian had told her, and truthfully, though he said it with a sneer, that she would be able to indulge in family emotion more unrestrainedly without him; but her heart, in that he is content that so it should be, is heavy within her. Involuntarily she, as the rushing train bears her onward over the well-known road, compares the Brian of to-day with the quiet, well-bred gentleman whose attentions to her had been, on the occasion of their first meeting, as marked as they were unobtrusive. Free as a bird in the air, and happy in her freedom, had she been then, and now—ah, what a slave she felt herself to be! courage gone—her power of resistance nil!

"Oh, that I had never married him!" she says, almost aloud; for there is no other occupant of the carriage, and hot tears rush to her eyelids as the memory of other and happier wives rises up before her mental vision, and she draws unwise comparisons between the respectful gentleness of their husbands and the rough and

grievously unyielding "ways" of hers.

But the same hurt pride which bade her weep, tells her to—at least, apparently rejoice as she draws near home. which seemed so dear to her never before! Home, where she is sure that,—should she ask it—sympathy, no less than love, would be her portion. Home, in which Cousin Susan-sparing of her words, but with a heart as true as steel to her adopted child-will wait her coming in the pretty room with its dwarf book-cases, which, with every other detail of furniture and ornament, Margaret with her mind's eye can see; and Home, where, as she remembers, but little time must be passed in "dear mother's" embrace, for Cousin Susan is jealous of the "child's" affection, and not for a world's worth would thoughtful Madge permit the faintest cloud to darken the sunshine of their meeting.

On one subject she is fully determined

to be silent, and that subject is, the conduct of her husband towards herself. has, in truth, nothing tangible to allege It is never his intention, she against him. believes, to be unkind, nor is it his fault if he is ignorant of what "kindness," according to her acceptation of the word, means. It is now a cause of much regret to Margaret that in her letters from abroad she did not abstain from pouring out, to those at home who loved her, "silly and childish "complaints against her husband. She had married him with her eyes open. and to save herself from the results of her own imprudence. If he had done but little to increase the love which she had sworn to feel for him, he had at least done nothing to forfeit the "honour" in which she was bound to hold him; by her, therefore, no word should be said that could by any possibility arouse in the breasts of others a contrary feeling.

Meanwhile the fact was certainly patent

to her that the pleasure of her visit to Oakden would not have been enhanced by the presence there of her parents' autocratic son-in-law.

Colonel Effingham's manner towards her relations, though scrupulously polite, was always so unmistakably suggestive of his intention to keep them, one and all, at a "respectful distance" that Margaret, who was very far from being conscious of any social inferiority (when contrasted with his family) on the part of her belongings, often felt the hot blood of indignation rise within her when witnessing shades of behaviour towards those she loved which, although they were slight enough to escape their notice, spoke volumes to her sensitive and independent spirit.

On the meeting between Margaret and her "people," I need not dwell. Words of kindness and of love—words to which of late her ears had been so entirely unaccustomed—were as "music spoken" to this unjoyous but uncomplaining bride; and, as she listened to them, she, realizing their contrast with the life that was before her, felt her heart sink within her for fear.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ONLY HUMAN.

"WHAT an evening! It is hardly possible to believe that it is but the tenth of May! Shall we be outraging the proprieties, if we take a quiet row on the Swale? What do you say, Miss de Beauvoir, to Mrs. Effingham and me catching, as the poets say, some of the fleeting moments as they fly, and utilising them in a quiet party on the river?"

It is Alan Carruthers who speaks; he has dined at Oakden, as has also John Forrest, who is always glad, poor man! to escape from the condensed noise, poor food, and general stuffiness of home to the

superior comforts which his friends' houses afford. He has been spending nearly the whole of a parson's week at Millburn, a charming small country abode which Alan Carruthers had lately inherited from a relation, and he is now making himself useful as fourth at the whist-table, where, having the misfortune to be his father-in-law's partner, he is exposed to many and very cutting rebukes on the subject of his absence of mind and general want of skill.

"Poor John! I am afraid he is not distinguishing himself," Margaret has just remarked. "I wonder he plays whist here at all; he gets so terribly bullied for being good-natured."

"He has probably trumped a thirteenth card, or has forgotten to return his partner's lead of trumps," suggested Alan.

"Ah, that is, I know, in my father's eyes, among the sins which are not to be forgiven," Margaret rejoins; and then the

trio—she, Alan, and Miss de Beauvoir, who form a group apart—listen in amused silence whilst Mr. Barham, inflated with impotent indignation, gives vent to it in angry words.

- "You couldn't, if you had tried for an hour—and you were nearly that thinking about it—have played a worse card. You must have known I had the nine——"
- "But—begging your pardon for contradicting you—I had not the least idea of it."
- "Then you ought to have known. My seven couldn't be beaten by Gylpyn" (Major Gylpyn was a retired half-pay officer, who insisted upon the above spelling of his name being the true and ancient one), "and you might have been certain that to finesse your knave was what you ought to have done."
- "Well, but in that case," said the Major, who was blessed with a squeaking voice and a general inability to understand any

subject clearly, "your king would have fallen to Mr. Forrest's ace. You see that, don't you, Mr. Forrest? If the nine of hearts had not happened to be in our kind host's hand, and if Mrs. Barham had not held the queen, we—that is, my partner and I——"

He is interrupted by a groan from the curate, one that is perfectly involuntary on his part, and which, when he hears it, he endeavours to gloss over with a cough. Mr. Barham, however, is not to be deceived by this poor subterfuge. The groan had been that of a sufferer whose patience under trial was well-nigh exhausted, and the master of the house, feeling the necessity of—for the moment, at least—refraining from driving his victim to extremities, took a milder tone, winding up some good advice as to card-playing with these words,

"If you want to be a whist-player, you must give your whole mind to it. It is the greatest mistake possible to do anything

by halves. If you remember this advice, and act upon it, you will be obliged to me some day, I can tell you that, Master Forrest, however little worth your while you may consider it to act upon my lessons now."

Neither the ghost of a smile nor the faintest shadow of a frown passed across John Forrest's meagre face as he listened to this singular paternal counsel, singular as being addressed to a working clergyman, whose duty it clearly was, not to "give up his entire mind" to the art—however noble and intellectual—of whist-playing. It was with far from complete approval that Alan Carruthers noticed the stolid demeanour of his friend. Patience—he was willing to acknowledge-is a virtue, and the turning of a second cheek to the smiter might be (its being so depended, however, he thought, much upon circumstances) a praiseworthy To outward appearance, also, nothing could be kinder than the consenting so often as did John Forrest to be Mr. Barham's butt and souffre-douleur, but then (ah! well a day for the buts, which so often lend—humble little words though they sound—so widely different a colouring, not only to words and deeds, but to "things" in general) where and what, Alan asked himself, was the motive, the hidden spring from which flowed, at the Oakden whisttable especially, (for at home poor John was sometimes, and that not inexcusably, driven to show "temper"), a sweetness of resignation which, admirable though it seemed, Mr. Carruthers felt that he would not willingly attempt to imitate.

Alan, as is the case with all largehearted men (and the peculiarity is more especially noticeable in those who are given to self-searching, was not), as a rule, harsh in his judgment upon others. He could find excuses for shortcomings where men less blameless than himself could discover no plea for the mercy of which the least erring among us so greatly stand in need, and therefore it was that when a lightthat of truth, as he feared—dawned upon him, and he began to perceive that the "flesh-pots of Egypt"-id est, a better dinner than poor Belle could afford to give him at home—had not a little to do with the almost superhuman endurance which Alan had at first so greatly admired, he commenced without delay to mentally make excuses for his friend. The doing so was, however, in that friend's presence, a difficult and a painful task. It hurt the large and generous heart of the richer man to see how possible a thing it is for poverty, and the grinding cares of life, to degrade a gifted nature, and reduce it, through the pressure of animal desires and needs, to a level with the mean and sordid.

CHAPTER XXV.

ALAN GROWS SENTIMENTAL.

THE state of John Forrest's mind could be of course no concern of his, nor could there be alleged the slightest reason why Alan Carruthers should take his friend's possible inward shortcomings to heart. Dwell upon them, however, he did, and that sadly, making such excuses meanwhile for the erring man as he could conscientiously find worthy to be brought forward in his behalf. And the most valid of these excuses lay, according to Alan's judgment, in the helpmeet whom his friend had chosen. A better girl, or a more useful housewife, than Isabel Barham did

not (so Carruthers allowed) exist, but he entertained the idea that something more than mere goodness, something better than the talent of making shillings go as far as possible, was wanted in John Forrest's wife. A tyro was the latter in knowledge of the sex whose best gift it is to form, when nature has failed to quite complete the task, such a one as he into a "man." In the wife of this ripe scholar and thoroughly well-intentioned priest this gift—as his friend had with sorrow speedily perceived—existed not!

It was the pressure of reflections such as these that kept Alan for a few minutes silent—silent, although thoughts had been aroused by his suggestion (the suggestion with which the last chapter opens) which would, had his mind not been strangely pre-occupied, have set his every pulse a-beating double-quick time in his veins.

The evening has closed in, but a "speaking quietude" outside,

"Enwraps the moveless scene."

The moon, in unclouded grandeur, has risen above the trees that skirt the river, and sheds a softened light on lawn, and bush, and flowers. For the season, the weather is wonderfully warm, so that Miss de Beauvoir,—enemy though she is to night air, and to abnormal proceedings in general,—makes no objection to the plan proposed.

"Only, my dear, you must wrap up well," she says. "I don't exactly know" (she, with a grim smile at her own joke, adds), "whether, in catching what Mr. Carruthers calls 'fleeting moments,' colds are liable to be caught as well; but there is certain to be dew, and the river air is healthier by day than by night."

By the time these simple truisms have been given voice to, Madge, thanks to Alan Carruthers's zeal in the cause, is equipped for the expedition, and the two who are to form it step out upon the moonlit lawn together. Over every object within sight is the tender silvering which heightens imagination, and lends a ghostlike appearance to the realities of creation: and amongst those realities stands Alan's "rare pale Margaret," looking marvellously picturesque in rather a battered gardenhat and a red Galway cloak which her companion has thrown over her shoulders. In youth, the spirits have, as we know, a marvellous power of rebound, and Madge, happy and, for the time, free, is, for a short while, as a girl again! She makes fun of the plague of cockchafers, one of which had settled in her glossy hair, and, as they near the river's brink, and the boat which is moored there, she, without a tinge of coquetry either in voice or manner, laughingly tosses away "mother's hat" (the which has a narrow escape of being carried away by the swift yet silent waters of the Swale), and begs of Alan Carruthers to detach from its place of refuge the "sticky"

creature which has ensconced itself amongst her chestnut plaits.

Alan, with the respect due to age, rescues Mrs. Barham's property from its perilous position, and then, with a gravity and composure of demeanour against which the quickened beatings of his heart protest, he proceeds to the not very easy task of removing what Madge merrily calls her bête brune from the shelter which it had chosen for itself.

"And now for the boat," he says; and as
—his duty done—he assists his companion
into the little wherry, no faintest pressure
of the delicate fingers awakens in her a
suspicion of the well-guarded truth that
the strong man by her side is weak as a
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of her presence. "No need to pull," he
—when they are seated—says. "We will
float down with the stream for a mile or
two, and—"

"What, past The Limes!" laughs Mar-

garet. "How can we be sure that this wicked deed of ours may not be seen and commented on? It is just possible that our excellent Lina may by this time be blessed with an admirer—a serenading one too, if she is in luck—and, in that case, if 'a fellow-feeling does not make them wondrous kind,' what chance have we of escaping censure?"

As usual, she speaks thoughtlessly, but not with his accustomed consideration for others, and forgetfulness of self, does Mr. Carruthers reply. He is so entirely, but also (as he ought to have felt) so perilously happy, that he cannot bring himself to say the few prudent words which might have spared poor Margaret some evil comments in the dark days which were to come. To row up stream would have been such a tame, unenjoyable thing to do, for their progress would have been soon arrested by the most common-place impediments. Thickly-growing, ugly reeds, hewn timber

moored at anchor, and waiting till daylight came, to be floated down the river, cumbered the way, and Alan would have found it hardish work to progress half a mile in the contrary direction from The Limes; whereas now, in the delicious stillness of the almost summer night, he could, with only an occasional touch of his light sculls, drift, as in a dream of Lotus-like repose, along the moon-lit waters with the woman whose beauty, imperfect as so many deemed it, but which had the power to set his every nerve a-quivering, for his companion on the way.

As I have said, if he had been quite himself, or, rather, quite the Alan Carruthers which he hoped and strove to be, the head of the wherry would not on that evening have been turned in the direction of the O'Reillys' villa. He would have thought more of the impulsive, imprudent woman near him, and of the possibility of injury to her, than of himself, and of the

great though fleeting pleasure which (at her expense, perhaps) he was permitting himself to enjoy.

He replies to her playful objection with a pleasantry as cheerful as her own.

"Imagination," he says, "is born, they say, of moonlight and the stars, and tonight those parents of 'sweet fancies' certainly show themselves in battalions. So you are able to imagine rosy-cheeked Kathleen with a lover! I confess that my powers in that way are more limited, and that I even doubt whether the sweetest 'Rise, dearest, rise,' that ever throat of lover warbled would tempt that young person to overstep, even by a single hair's breadth, the rules of custom and decorum."

By this time the boat has swiftly, and almost imperceptibly, glided onward, till her prow is even with a certain spreading willow-tree, the pendent branches of which dip into the stream. The tree stands upon the Oakden grounds, but many a.

trailing branchlet is washed along by the strong current till it laves the low banks of the adjoining villa. As they approach the willow, not a sound disturbs the stillness of the night; so perfect, indeed, is the quiet, and so entire the sense of solitude, that Alan is reminded by it of Wordsworth's well-known lines, the which, slightly parodying, he in a hushed voice repeats—

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The river glideth at its own sweet will;

Dear God! the very wavelets seem asleep,

And only our two hearts are waking still."

It was the nearest approach to a betrayal of his sentiments which had ever, frequently as he had been tried and tempted, escaped his lips, and it was, in truth, not only a thoughtless betrayal, but an entirely involuntary one, which those few over-suggestive words might be considered. Still of their utterance Alan feels, the next moment, ashamed, and

hastens to redeem, as far as may be possible, his error.

"I wonder," he says, reflectingly, and in the slightest of emotional tones, "whether, when Members of Parliament, and other sufferers from the same cause, were complaining of the 'villainous smells which assaulted their offended nostrils,' it ever occurred to any of them that the often quoted words 'of its own sweet will,' were written a good deal more than half a century ago of the River Thames, then, I have no doubt, nearly, if not quite, as unsavoury as was the grand 'Old Father' before the Embankment rose, and 'health and sweetness, the two noblest things,' as Dean Swift calls them, in life, resulted from the change."

He had purposely been what he would have himself called *prosy*, for his self-reliance had received a shock, and it was his object to pass the short time which he must necessarily spend with Mrs. Effing-

ham, in talk of the most common-place description.

Margaret was about to answer—a neat little compliment on the excellence of his memory being on the tip of her tongue—when the sound of voices, mingled with low-toned laughter, arrests her further speech.

The boat is scarcely more than half a dozen yards from the bank, and, as the moon has just emerged from beneath the silver lining of a big, jagged-edged cloud, Alan doubts not that from Mr. O'Reilly's pleasure-grounds, whence the voices proceed, both the boat and its occupants must be distinctly visible.

Margaret's first impulse is to hide. The courage to defy, of which she had once been so ready to boast, had left her, as it seemed, for ever, and she says, in a nervous whisper,

"Let us pull up under the shadow of

the trees. Whoever they are, they may have been too busy to notice us."

"Oh, not they! They have spotted us, you may be sure," answered Alan, as, keeping his light craft in mid-stream, he, with an almost unnecessary amount of splash, continued the descent. "And, after all, what does it signify if you are recognized?" he, endeavouring to re-assure her, says. "I daresay they are only servants; and why should we be afraid of being seen in an act of which we are not ashamed?"

Margaret shakes her head.

"It was not a vulgar laugh," she says, "and the voice, I am almost sure, was Kathleen's. I hope, oh! so sincerely, that she has a lover. It would, as I said before, make them all so very much more goodnatured to other people."

After this not very agreeable interlude, very little more conversation passed between the two. Margaret both looked perplexed, and felt uncomfortable. She could not reconcile her feeling of self-respect with the notion that she might, possibly, again be fated to wither beneath the blight of cruel scorn, pointing

"Its slow, unmoving finger"

at her: and then it vexed her not a little that Mr. Carruthers should have seen evidences of a weakness which stirred her own self-contempt so sorely. Of what, she asked herself, could she be now afraid? Married women are safe from affronts such as those which, in her weak girlhood, she had been obliged to bear; obliged because, although she had a father big enough and strong enough to have been her champion, there was that in Christopher Barham effectually prevented his being which looked upon in the light of a redresser of wrongs. Weak, frivolous, and self-conceited, present ease and comfort were too entirely the objects of his being's end and

aim, for family cares to awaken interest in his breast. And so, seeing that from her youth upwards she had stood, as it were, alone, it behoved this girl to have been especially reserved and prudent in her conduct. Very close was the watch which she should have set upon her tongue, and every soi-disant friend should have been treated by her as if one day he or she might be her enemy. So to act, would, however, have been directly contrary to Madge's ardent, impulsive nature. heart was constantly on her lips, and the quick, sarcastic words which the display in others of folly, or of spite, not seldom drew forth from those same rosy portals, caused the girl-whose chief yearning in life was for sympathy and tenderness—to be, especially with her own sex, more an object of dislike and fear than of affection.

creature which has ensconced itself amongst her chestnut plaits.

Alan, with the respect due to age, rescues Mrs. Barham's property from its perilous position, and then, with a gravity and composure of demeanour against which the quickened beatings of his heart protest, he proceeds to the not very easy task of removing what Madge merrily calls her bête brune from the shelter which it had chosen for itself.

"And now for the boat," he says; and as—his duty done—he assists his companion into the little wherry, no faintest pressure of the delicate fingers awakens in her a suspicion of the well-guarded truth that the strong man by her side is weak as a bent reed when he is under the influence of her presence. "No need to pull," he —when they are seated—says. "We will float down with the stream for a mile or two, and—"

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tween, Mrs. Cowper apparently recognizing the fact that men, as a rule, soon grow weary of religious conversation.

Association with Walter Donovan had, although she loved him, not done Margaret any good; his refinement and habitual deference to herself and her opinions, formed a striking contrast with the habits and modes of speech of the man with whom her lot was, for good or evil, cast, and this contrast was, as I have said, far from having been of service to her. Comparisons such as these are amongst the most "odious" that a weak human creature can indulge in, and it would have been far better for my heroine if, instead of dwelling upon Walter Donovan's pleasant advantages of manner, and of savoir vivre, she had reminded herself that temperaments greatly vary, and that the lack of early training, and of the example and habits of a home in which God is both outwardly and inwardly respected, may be safely pleaded in excuse

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ham, in talk of the most common-place description.

Margaret was about to answer—a neat little compliment on the excellence of his memory being on the tip of her tongue—when the sound of voices, mingled with low-toned laughter, arrests her further speech.

The boat is scarcely more than half a dozen yards from the bank, and, as the moon has just emerged from beneath the silver lining of a big, jagged-edged cloud, Alan doubts not that from Mr. O'Reilly's pleasure-grounds, whence the voices proceed, both the boat and its occupants must be distinctly visible.

Margaret's first impulse is to hide. The courage to defy, of which she had once been so ready to boast, had left her, as it seemed, for ever, and she says, in a nervous whisper,

"Let us pull up under the shadow of

the trees. Whoever they are, they may have been too busy to notice us."

"Oh, not they! They have spotted us, you may be sure," answered Alan, as, keeping his light craft in mid-stream, he, with an almost unnecessary amount of splash, continued the descent. "And, after all, what does it signify if you are recognized?" he, endeavouring to re-assure her, says. "I daresay they are only servants; and why should we be afraid of being seen in an act of which we are not ashamed?"

Margaret shakes her head.

"It was not a vulgar laugh," she says, "and the voice, I am almost sure, was Kathleen's. I hope, oh! so sincerely, that she has a lover. It would, as I said before, make them all so very much more goodnatured to other people."

After this not very agreeable interlude, very little more conversation passed between the two. Margaret both looked perplexed, and felt uncomfortable. She could not reconcile her feeling of self-respect with the notion that she might, possibly, again be fated to wither beneath the blight of cruel scorn, pointing

"Its slow, unmoving finger"

at her; and then it vexed her not a little that Mr. Carruthers should have seen evidences of a weakness which stirred her own self-contempt so sorely. Of what, she asked herself, could she be now afraid? Married women are safe from affronts such as those which, in her weak girlhood, she had been obliged to bear; obliged because. although she had a father big enough and strong enough to have been her champion, there was that in Christopher Barham which effectually prevented his being looked upon in the light of a redresser of wrongs. Weak, frivolous, and self-conceited, present ease and comfort were too entirely the objects of his being's end and

aim, for family cares to awaken interest in his breast. And so, seeing that from her youth upwards she had stood, as it were, alone, it behoved this girl to have been especially reserved and prudent in her conduct. Very close was the watch which she should have set upon her tongue, and every soi-disant friend should have been treated by her as if one day he or she might be her enemy. So to act, would, however, have been directly contrary to Madge's ardent, impulsive nature. heart was constantly on her lips, and the quick, sarcastic words which the display in others of folly, or of spite, not seldom drew forth from those same rosy portals, caused the girl-whose chief yearning in life was for sympathy and tenderness—to be, especially with her own sex, more an object of dislike and fear than of affection.

CHAPTER XXVI.

COUSIN SUSAN KEEPS HER EYES OPEN.

A ND now the time has come when we must follow Margaret to the home of which, at present, she knows so little. She has been told by Brian that all at Greycliffe is in a comfortable and satisfactory state. He has had an eye to everything — has superintended carpenters, masons, and plumbers, a large proportion of whom he had driven half wild by the mania which possessed him of teaching each man his individual trade. Truly—as Margaret had the courage once, playfully, to say to him—he must have been born with a brain brimful of encyclopedical

knowledge, for a lifetime of three score years and ten would have been far too short for the various apprenticeships which, by his own showing, he had served.

Margaret did not leave London without regret, but that regret was, in one respect, softened by the passing away, in a peaceful sleep, of her old friend in York Street. Better so-far better than to linger on a breathing but unconscious corpse; and Margaret, when she heard that the widow had breathed her last, thanked God for her that so it was. A little for herself she grieved. A link with the past was broken, and she could not quite forget that in that little room, so drearily empty now, she had first listened to simple gospel truths, and been urged to make those precious truths her guides to Life Eternal. And he, too, the thoughtless soldier, and already world-wearied man, had in like manner listened, but the words of counsel which were spoken to him were few and far between, Mrs. Cowper apparently recognizing the fact that men, as a rule, soon grow weary of religious conversation.

Association with Walter Donovan had. although she loved him, not done Margaret any good: his refinement and habitual deference to herself and her opinions, formed a striking contrast with the habits and modes of speech of the man with whom her lot was, for good or evil, cast, and this contrast was, as I have said, far from having been of service to her. Comparisons such as these are amongst the most "odious" that a weak human creature can indulge in, and it would have been far better for my heroine if, instead of dwelling upon Walter Donovan's pleasant advantages of manner. and of savoir vivre, she had reminded herself that temperaments greatly vary, and that the lack of early training, and of the example and habits of a home in which God is both outwardly and inwardly respected, may be safely pleaded in excuse

cousin susan keeps her eyes open. 261 for those whose custom it is not to

"resist" evil.

Self-government, as this poor young wife had often need to remember, is a good of priceless value, and cannot be too early taught. The child who is not betimes (and that practically) convinced that he must rule himself, will, when he is past the age when little ones are prettily told that they "should never let their angry passions rise," be in terrible danger of yielding to passion's impulses. To "growl and fight" are instincts born in the man, as in the tiger, and, if such instincts are not, by force of habit, early suppressed, the chances are that he may be, when the day of power comes, and the love of rule burns fiercely within him, a "render" and a torturer of the feeble ones over whom he rules.

But it is time, and more than time, to abandon abstract subjects, and return, with a far less discursive pen than has been hitherto used, to the narrative of Margaret Effingham's "ower true" adventures.

It is not without a sinking of the heart that she finds herself approaching the spot in which, as she has been told, her home for years (barring accidents, of course) is to be fixed. To do him only justice, Brian has never painted, either in glowing or "laughing" colours, the place in which they are to be located. It is possible that, had he been able to form to himself the slightest notion of the effect which Grevand solitary, and utterly cliffe. bare neglected-looking, would produce upon his wife, he would either have not taken a lease of the weird place at all, or have, at least, prepared her in some degree for the That he allowshock which awaited her. ed her to drive up to the door unenlightened as to all, and more than all, the facts which had already, by one on whose truthfulness she could rely, been imparted to her, can only be attributed to a preoccupied brain, and, in some measure, also, to an idea which had taken firm hold upon his mind; the idea, namely, that when once a woman is married—once she is in possession of that most blessed of boons, a husband—all else, society in especial, must be indifferent to her. With him to think of, with his dinner to order, and his return, after—say from eight to twelve hours of solitary and anxious watching, to look forward to, a woman must be indeed unreasonable if she pines in her loneliness for more!

There is no denying the fact that the good qualities of the few, often produce evil effects upon the minds as well as on the conduct of the many, and it is illustrative of this truth that Margaret's strong sense of duty, and, more than all, her intense dislike to causing disappointment and vexation to her husband, entirely closed her lips against even the faintest expression of discontent; the consequence of

which forbearance was that he, unaware of the efforts which it cost her to be—under especially trying circumstances of health and nerves—cheerful and uncomplaining, took her happiness in her new home as an accepted fact, and never troubled himself to inquire how such a thing could be!

During the weeks which must necessarily elapse before an event-looked forward to by Margaret with feelings of mingled fear and ecstasy—could occur, the young wife, thus suddenly transplanted into a soil so utterly uncongenial, had not a few mauvais quarts d'heures to pass through. The worst, and almost trying of these were the long hours which she spent in waiting and watching for Brian when, either with gun in hand, on the perilous sea-washed cliffs, or in his ten-ton yacht, sailed "-as the experienced fishermen on the coast told her was the case—he breasted the waves, and dared the wild winds of that bleak, unsheltered coast with a dauntless courage that awoke the wonder of those who witnessed it. But what the poor wife suffered when darkness crept over the scene, and when—

"Cloud upon cloud, in dark and deepening mass, Rolled o'er the blackened waters,"

and still he—the object of true wifely love at last—returned not to gladden her with his welcome presence, passes all power of description. And to suffer this was, nine days out of ten, this "waiting" woman's portion. Can we, then, wonder that Miss de Beauvoir (when, in fulfilment of a promise made some weeks before, she arrived at Greycliffe) found its mistress looking strangely and almost alarmingly ill.

To Cousin Susan's anxious eyes, her favourite had seemed far from well, when, for one short week, the young wife had betaken herself to the home of which she had been the sunshine and the pride! A

visit it was, for which all at Oakden, from Charlie, the Skye terrier, to "old Kit,"— as Mr. Barham was sometimes called,—had for a month been longing; and although Madge had doubtless been an altered creature then, the change had been attributed to natural causes. She had uttered no word of complaint, and, for anything which she (concerning her husband) had said to the contrary, Brian Effingham might be the most perfect and most congenial of Benedicks.

And now—now that she had full opportunities for studying Madge, and deciding for herself—if such a thing were possible—whether or not there existed any other than physical causes for the metamorphosis (for in that light she considered it) which had taken place in her godchild—Miss de Beauvoir was fain to confess that, whatever reasons Madge might be able to produce, for her low spirits and weakness of nerves, want of affection for her

husband was not one of them. It is true that the manner of each to each had nothing in it even of the unobtrusive tenderness (possibly the reader may render my meaning rightly) which, by the least demonstrative of married pairs, is sometimes permitted sparingly to appear. Neither did Colonel Effingham—a state of things which at first greatly surprised his visitor-appear at all inclined to "fritter away" his time by endeavouring to make hers, in that dreary solitude, pass less gloomily. Of his daily absences, from early morn till dewy eve-absences which were never either explained or accounted for-did Margaret never either complain or marvel. over. That her woman's pride was wounded, and her heart rendered very sore by reason of neglect so open and continued, were facts the existence of which Miss de-Beauvoir was only allowed to guess.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"NOT A WORD TO BRIAN."

On the third day after Miss de Beauvoir's arrival, the weather was too boisterous for anything—excepting, as Madge said, a "Mother Carey's chicken"—to be "out on the loose." Round the big, ugly building, the fierce wind—"Destroyer and Preserver"—howled and blustered, whilst against the blurred window-panes the rain kept streaming down continuously. The afternoon was waning, and still no hope of change.

"How nice it must be in your little room at Oakden now, Cousin Susan," said remorseful Margaret, who, nella miseria of the time present, could think regretfully of former (till now) little appreciated comforts; "and," she added, sorrowfully, "there is not a single nice book here for you to read. Only sporting ones, about guns and fishing-rods; while, as for the library people, they always put upon subscribers who live far in the country, and send any trash they like. Novels, too, even the very best of them, are, I know, not your kind of reading."

A truth which Miss de Beauvoir proudly admitted. For novels in general, as well as for those who "took delight" in them, she professed much contempt; but necessity, besides being the mother of invention, is also that of great discoveries, of the truth of which axiom Cousin Susan is, after the following wise, a living proof.

The weather was, as I have said, at its worst. Madge had left her guest for a short while to herself, and the latter, greedy for mental food, had in her des-

peration betaken herself to the despised "book-box" for the wherewith to satisfy her cravings. Luckily for her, there lay, confusedly mixed up with "trash," one good and interesting story, the which (its title being "Archie Lovell") the excellent spinster, blushing at her own degradation, carried off to "glance over," but not-oh, no!-to read. But, in spite of herself, she did read the pages of that pleasant book, and withal, her interest in the story grew so intense that twilight, before she was aware that so it was, cast a shade over the leaves, and, looking up, she perceived that Margaret, who had been (when last she saw "the child") seated in the deep window recess, was no longer in the room. For a few moments Miss de Beauvoir sat pondering over the commencement, and wondering over the probable finale, of the tale, but very soon surprise at Madge's absence roused her from these unwonted speculations on fictitious woes, and, with an almost

audible "Where can she be?" Cousin Susan trotted away in search of the truant.

A big, rambling old tenement is Greycliffe, less than half furnished, and containing, besides uncarpeted passages innumerable, which—apparently, at least—"lead to nothing," a number of unused rooms, the doors of which are always closed, conveying to nervous Margaret the impression, as she once confessed to Brian, who laughed at her for a "fanciful little idiot," that the dead, waiting in their coffins for burial, were kept in fearful durance behind those heavy oaken portals.

It was past those doors, and into Margaret's sleeping room, that Miss de Beauvoir betook herself, but she found the large, comfortless-looking apartment empty of human form. This struck her as singular, seeing that in no other chamber was there a fire kept burning, and the weather had become bitterly cold; so, ringing the bell sharply, she, having by that time arrived

at the end of her own conjectures, summoned Morgan to her counsels.

"Have you any idea," she said, a trifle tremulously, for the giving of words to vague alarm is always felt as a great step towards the realization of evil—"have you any idea where Mrs. Effingham can be?"

Mrs. Morgan, an attenuated young person of thirty-five, with scant, dust-hued hair, and a pinched together face, draws herself up stiffly.

"I couldn't say for certain, 'm," she says; "but if she ain't in the drawing-room, nor yet in the lobby, a-fretting of herself to death as usual because the Colonel's late, it's most likely that she's gone, poor thing, outside."

"Outside!—what, out of doors in this dreadful weather! Why, it is enough to kill her!" exclaims Miss de Beauvoir.

"That may be true, 'm, certainly; but it isn't the rain or the cold—begging your pardon, 'm, for contradicting you—as will kill Mrs. Effingham so soon as the worrit she goes through. Ever since she hasn't been able, poor dear lady, to get down the cliffs to the boat, so that she might be with the Colonel, and (for I guessed what she went for) be in danger too, if so be that he, who has just as much fear in him as a wild Injin, was to be in any fix out on the water-well, 'm, ever since that time she has been in such a way when the Colonel's been out after hours! Watching at the window as long as ever she could see a yard, and then out upon the cliff's edge, where the path down is so narrow, whether for man or beast, that it makes one giddy to look at it."

"And you think that she is there now? Oh, my poor Madge! My worn out darling!" Miss de Beauvoir murmurs, half aloud, as, almost tripping down the broad oak staircase, she hurries towards the heavy entrance-doors.

"Take care, 'm!" Morgan cries; "the vol. II.

wind's that strong, it will knock you backwards. I'll just touch the bell for John." The which precaution having been taken, Mrs. Morgan proceeds, her tastes and habits lying that way, to colour still more darkly the picture which she had first drawn of her mistress's trials.

"She'll go, sometimes, she will, for a mile and more, along the narrow cliff-road, till she hears his voice in the distance, and then she hurries back, panting like a shot bird, as you may say, for fear he should know she'd been that foolish as to look after him."

John, the footman, had by this time made his appearance, and was about to cautiously open the door, when he was saved the trouble by a feebler hand than his own, and, in another moment, the force of a storm-gust entering in, nearly flung Cousin Susan's light and unresisting form upon the stone pavement of the hall. For a moment, not being used to such rough

usage, she was too much frightened and bewildered to speak, but the sight of Margaret's pale face and drenched hair (for she had entered with the blast) quickly recalled her scattered senses, and betrayed to her the fact that this last torture of suspense had been, as is the last straw to an overburdened horse, something too much, in her weak state, for Margaret to support.

"What is it? What has happened? Oh, child, how could you" (taking the trembling woman round the waist, and supporting her towards the drawing-room) "leave the house on such a night? And with only this light shawl"—touching the drenched garment—"on your shoulders! It is enough to kill you——"

"Oh, hush! hush!" a frightened voice breaks in. "There he is! Don't you hear his whistle? Not a word! Oh, please not, about my going out. He would not like it. These three past nights it has been fine, and the sea as calm as though it had been summer; besides, he has not been so very late till now, and when he is —but—oh, look cheerful—do, and not as if you had been listening to my complaints and miseries."

Brian Effingham, just as the last word is spoken, enters, in his usual noisy fashion, the room, and Margaret (how she effects her object let those women say who, through many tears, have been taught the terrible art of dissembling) calls a smile to . her weary lips, and cheerful tones to her weak voice, as she questions her lord as to the sport which he has enjoyed that day.

But, before he can reply, another change—one which, this time, is not the consequence of her own determined will—creeps slowly over the poor pale face. The mouth is suddenly contorted by a spasm of agonizing pain, and a cry, short and sharp, escapes her lips. Miss de Beauvoir, whose experience in the crisis now possibly at

hand is nil, but whose presence of mind has not quite deserted her, whispers to Colonel Effingham that the doctor, who lives twelve miles away, and the nurse, who, fortunately, is no farther to seek than "the village," which it takes little more than half an hour to reach, should be immediately sent for.

For the first time perhaps in his life, Brian is frightened into doing as he is bid. The case is one of emergency, and possibility of argument there is none. Had moments been less precious, the chances are that he would not have so peaceably allowed the occasion to slip by unimproved, and that those about him would have been edified by the information that Doctor Parkyns, large as his practice was known to be, might nevertheless "learn a thing or two" from one so well qualified to teach him his duties as was Colonel Brian Effingham.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ON TENTER-HOOKS.

THOSE among my readers who have watched in breathless suspense beside the sick and tortured bed of one beloved need not, I think, be told how beyond measure greater, how without comparison more difficult to patiently endure, would be the rack of suspense if medical aid were absent, and if, whilst life was trembling in the balance, the choice of remedies rested solely with the ignorant and the inexperienced. Imagination, I repeat, can be able in some degree to picture to the mind this state of things; but to those who have gone through the

trial, the very memory of it is torture.

"Aspettare e non venire, Stare in letto, e non dormire Ben servire, e non gradire Son tre cose da morire."

so says the Italian proverb; but to my thinking, all these cose together, even were they to be ten times repeated, would not be equal in torment to one five minutes of time passed in witnessing the extremity of human suffering which you possess no means—strive with your poor brain as you may to find some—of assuaging.

It was torment such as this which Miss de Beauvoir endured whilst waiting the advent of Dr. Parkyn ("Doctor" by courtesy only, for he was the dispensary surgeon, and was withal given, report said, to a love of strong waters), who had been sent for in double quick time by Brian Effingham. One hour—two—three elapsed, and the poor anxious woman, who had been early told by the nurse that there

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"Outside!—what, out of doors in this dreadful weather! Why, it is enough to kill her!" exclaims Miss de Beauvoir.

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was "nothing for it but patience," remained beside the sufferer, wiping the dews of agony from her brow, whilst her own ached and throbbed as though to bursting with the burden, heavier almost than she could bear, which had been laid upon her frail shoulders.

"When will he come? Oh, when will he come?" was her constant whispered query to Mrs. Divers, the nurse, whose cheerful reply (for she had the happiness of feeling herself quite equal to the occasion) of—

"Lor, Miss, don't you be troubling of yourself, nor this dear lady neither. We shall do just as well without the doctor. Why, I couldn't count up the times as he's never showed his face till the dear baby was born, and the mamma—bless her!—done up all safe and comfortable, for all the world as if there warn't a Doctor Parkyn in the world."

A rough comforter, but a genial and a

rational one, and when, after a suspense of six hours' duration, the crisis (no doctor having arrived to share the responsibilities of the case) arrived, and a woman child was, in that torture-chamber, born into the world, Miss de Beauvoir, in the joy and gratitude of her heart, could have embraced the honest woman as a sister.

It had been a "good time," according to Mrs. Diver, that poor Margaret had gone through; there had been no noticeable and recognized drawbacks to her recovery, and yet, as the days and weeks wore on, she regained neither strength of body nor elasticity of spirit. The power to sleep almost deserted her; she grew more nervous and more depressed than Miss de Beauvoir, knowing what "the child" had, in the days of her bright maidenhood, been, could have believed possible, and the poor old spinster, whose spirits were never of the brightest, lost even the small

at the end of her own conjectures, summoned Morgan to her counsels.

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announcement of her intended departure did not fill her godchild's with direct regret, and the worst forbodings for the future. Once and only once the poor old spinster made allusion to the apathy on Madge's part which she (Cousin Susan) found so hard to bear.

"I shall miss you terribly, my dear," she said, and her voice sounded very cold and stern, "but I doubt whether you will wish me back again; it seems that I have done you more harm than good, and that Mrs. Cameron, who, as everyone knows, is the most worldly old woman in the universe, is to quite set you up in health and spirits."

Margaret sighs wearily, but she makes no allusion to her relation's intended flitting.

"Ah, how I wish she could!" the harassed woman says. "If I could only shake off this most miserable state of feeling! If I could—for one half hour

usage, she was too much frightened and bewildered to speak, but the sight of Margaret's pale face and drenched hair (for she had entered with the blast) quickly recalled her scattered senses, and betrayed to her the fact that this last torture of suspense had been, as is the last straw to an overburdened horse, something too much, in her weak state, for Margaret to support.

"What is it? What has happened? Oh, child, how could you" (taking the trembling woman round the waist, and supporting her towards the drawing-room) "leave the house on such a night? And with only this light shawl"—touching the drenched garment—"on your shoulders! It is enough to kill you——"

"Oh, hush! hush!" a frightened voice breaks in. "There he is! Don't you hear his whistle? Not a word! Oh, please not, about my going out. He would not like it. These three past nights it has been fine, and the sea as calm as though it had been summer; besides, he has not been so very late till now, and when he is —but—oh, look cheerful—do, and not as if you had been listening to my complaints and miseries."

Brian Effingham, just as the last word is spoken, enters, in his usual noisy fashion, the room, and Margaret (how she effects her object let those women say who, through many tears, have been taught the terrible art of dissembling) calls a smile to her weary lips, and cheerful tones to her weak voice, as she questions her lord as to the sport which he has enjoyed that day.

But, before he can reply, another change—one which, this time, is not the consequence of her own determined will—creeps slowly over the poor pale face. The mouth is suddenly contorted by a spasm of agonizing pain, and a cry, short and sharp, escapes her lips. Miss de Beauvoir, whose experience in the crisis now possibly at

hand is nil, but whose presence of mind has not quite deserted her, whispers to Colonel Effingham that the doctor, who lives twelve miles away, and the nurse, who, fortunately, is no farther to seek than "the village," which it takes little more than half an hour to reach, should be immediately sent for.

For the first time perhaps in his life, Brian is frightened into doing as he is bid. The case is one of emergency, and possibility of argument there is none. Had moments been less precious, the chances are that he would not have so peaceably allowed the occasion to slip by unimproved, and that those about him would have been edified by the information that Doctor Parkyns, large as his practice was known to be, might nevertheless "learn a thing or two" from one so well qualified to teach him his duties as was Colonel Brian Effingham.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AT SHORT NOTICE.

ter, all his determination of character, all his proud conviction that he not only never would, but never did yield, Brian Effingham was perhaps more likely than are most men to be, as it were, hustled into a species of involuntary submission by a woman's loud voice, cheerful manner, and lively, agreeable talk. It was through her possession of these gifts that Mrs. Cameron obtained a temporary influence over her so-called nephew. She was, in truth, his cousin, after la mode de Bretagne, a handsome woman still, in spite of her fifty years, for her complexion was

still brilliantly fair, and her strong teeth—
a sure sign of the good health and the immunity from care which she had enjoyed —were white as pearls.

To Brian her coming to Greycliffe was indeed a boon. He had become so wearied of his wife's cousin—of her stiffness, her "priggishness," and her general unsuitableness to himself—that he hailed with joy the advent of this bluff and rather boisterous woman, with whom nobody—as he truly said—need be on their Ps and Qs, and whose "jolly" laugh seemed all at once to change the character of his—till now—gloomy home.

And Madge, how did she support this inroad into her quiet, this assumption over her of a right—the right only of a guardian or of a mother—to see that she, "a poor, weak creature," did her duty in the station in life to which it had pleased God to call her? In good sooth, not over well. The unaccustomed noise and loud talking

sorely tried her shaken nerves, and the dread (born of long continued sleepless nights, and the frightful sensations attendant thereupon) that she would soon lose her senses, terribly grew and haunted her. She spoke to no one of the poignant suffering which she endured. Friend she had none to whisper peace to her troubled spirit, and no kindly voice of sympathizing doctor even bade her be of good cheer, in that there were for her better times to come.

Mrs. Cameron soon gave up as hopeless her efforts to rouse Margaret from what she considered the state of self-indulgent lethargy into which the unhappy young wife had fallen. It was useless, she told Brian, to be for ever preaching, and, as for always staying at home because Margaret was dull, she, Mrs. Cameron, considered it worse than nonsense—just spoiling her, and nothing else. So, convinced by "Aunt Judith's" argument that the worst thing he

could do for Margaret was to "give way" to her, Colonel Effingham gradually returned to his old life, and Madge's solitude, together with her sufferings, weighed daily more heavily upon her rapidly failing spirits.

Meanwhile Mrs. Cameron, who loved society, and hated to be alone, grew very tired of Greycliffe. She was not rich, and had accepted Brian's invitation from, in great part, motives of pecuniary interest. To live, for several months, cost free was an object with this poor lady; and, moreover, her relation, as was the case with herself, enjoyed good living, and she had no doubt that at Greycliffe everything would be of the best. Which, in fact, it was: so much so, indeed, that when Mrs. Cameron began to find herself bored, and at some loss how to make the dragging hours fly faster, she turned towards the many good things that were spread upon the table, and found, in discussing

them, consolation for her mental wants. And Brian—as unlike the great poet in this as in other signal respects—delighted to see his cheery "Aunt Judith" eat. A good trencher-man, or, failing that, a ditto woman, was to him a desideratum of life: and then, when the succulent repast was over, and pale, sad Margaret had crept from the room, Mrs. Cameron, fat and fair, and full of life's good things, would, leaning back comfortably in her chair, keep him company whilst he smoked his post-prandial pipe. And, as he puffed the fragrant weed, who more ready than "Aunt Judith" to talk and be amusing; who more prompt to laugh at her funny little stories than Madge's appreciating husband?

"It was not a very large party" (she is describing, with some verve, a Cheltenham dinner at which—for her home was in that cheerful Western town—the worthy widow had lately "assisted"), "but as there was rather a big wig (only a dean and a

Lord's cousin, but he was a big wig to them) expected, the dinner, which they had a cook in to dress, was tolerably good. Mrs. Jones was greater than I ever saw her. You don't remember her dress, I daresay, on the day—it is two years ago now—when you dined with me, and saw her in all her glory, with red china-asters in her cap?"

Brian, thus appealed to, acknowledges with regret that Mrs. Jones's head-gear, as it appeared on that occasion, had escaped his memory.

"Well, it doesn't matter," Mrs. Cameron continues, "only she had on just such another cap—red flowers and all. After dinner Miss Jones performed, as usual, on the piano—a classic piece of Chopin's, fine, but noisy—and her mamma, whilst the thunder rolled, and the runs grew fast and furious, beat time with her head and hand, the flowers vibrating in concert to the music. There was a harmless-

looking old lady sitting on the sofa next to me, and to her-speaking across me in her loud voice—the voice, you know, of a person who, being rather deaf, cannot moderatemodulate—ha! ha! I mean, her tones—Mrs. J. said, 'Do you like shopping?'—her pronunciation, poor thing, of Chopin. Upon which the amiable-looking old lady (I haven't an idea who she was) aroused herself, and with great energy, for a tender chord had evidently been touched, answered, 'Indeed, no, Mrs. Jones. I hate I don't know a greater nuisance upon earth,' &c., &c. And all this to the proud mother, who had expected, and almost asked for, a compliment on her daughter's brilliant execution of the piece! To a looker-on, it really was almost as good as a play."

Brian, as is expected of him, laughs heartily at this little anecdote; and then, having had rather a hard day's work after "ducks," he, unreproved, indulges in a siesta. How long his state of oblivion has lasted he knows not, but on his waking he is greatly surprised to perceive that his guest, instead of being where he had seen her last—namely, seated in a comfortable arm-chair—is lying, stretched at her full length, upon the carpet.

CHAPTER XXX.

MARGARET IS TAKEN TO LONDON.

"I CAN never forget the sensation, Nettie. No, not even if I were to live, which I hope I shall not, for a hundred years. Oh, what a blessed chance for me that doctor coming to shoot near Greycliffe was! Directly he saw ne lying on the sofa opposite to poor paralysed Mrs. Cameron, 'he took compassion on me,' and pronounced that I had no business there. Then he made inquiry, and when he found that I had been mouths without sleep, and weeks with the, sad to see, almost unconscious creature opposite for my sole companion, he said that mine must

be a wonderfully healthy brain for it not to have done more than stagger under the weight of such inflictions."

"It must have been terrible, indeed, poor dear," Mignonette, who had been allowed to visit her sister-in-law for a few days, says. (They are in London, at a quiet lodging, for Margaret has been peremptorily ordered "change," and already that requirement, together with the professional care and advice so long needed in her case, had worked wonders to-"And how strange it was wards a cure.) that you did not care the very least about this precious thing!" and Nettie, as she says the words, presses a rapturous kiss upon the cheek of the baby niece which rests upon her lap.

"Yes," Margaret says, "that does seem to me now the most wonderful thing of all; but with *sleep*—blessed sleep—I came, thank God! altogether to myself again. Dr. Darvill gave me, on the day he came

to Greycliffe, nearly a whole grain of morphia, and oh, Nettie! when the drowsy sense of rest began to steal over me—remember I had been for months staring, wide awake, and ever tossing on my sleepless bed—the feeling was one than which heaven itself cannot, I am sure, be more ecstatic."

"And you were not to see Mrs. Cameron again? That must have been also a pleasant prescription, for, though I never saw the poor thing in her present plight, I knew what she was before the attack seized her, and I, for one, should not have cared much then to have her always sitting opposite to me."

"If I had been well, I hope I should not have minded it; but as it was—how-ever, we won't talk of that—Brian has been very grieved, for him, about his poor Aunt Judith. He says the way she enjoyed her lobster cutlets and toasted cheese that day was quite a pleasure to see."

Mignonette, hoping she is not unfeeling, here suggests that possibly too much indulgence in her favourite dishes had produced the malady from which it was more than probable Mrs. Cameron would never entirely recover, and Margaret cannot deny that Dr. Darvill had been of that opinion also.

"She was of an apoplectic habit, he said, and ought to have been more careful about her diet. 'As for you, ma'am,' he said to me, 'you ought to go to sleep for the next six months at least.' Mr. Ansdell pronounced very much the same opinion when I came to London. He asked me many questions about my life before that darling was born, and, when he found what shocks and frights had been my portion. he did not wonder, he said, at all that I had gone through since. 'Your husband's sole excuse,' he said, 'for not having taken better care of you lies in his ignorance regarding such matters; but a little

common sense, and a slight curbing of his own will, might have saved you, Mrs. Effingham, from being afflicted with the most terrible malady, that of thoroughly shaken nerves, with which God has seen fit to visit his creatures.' 'I used to fancy I should go mad,' I said, 'and oh! what I suffered then, no tongue can tell.' 'You ought to have had some reliable person near to assure you-which is the truththat those who dread madness are the very last to suffer from it.' And, dear Nettie, Mr. Ansdell was quite right, for the being left to brood, without companionship—for, you see, Brian generally out,-over my woes, increased them terribly. However, I trust that the worst is over now, and indeed gratitude that so it is ought to fill my heart entirely."

"Gratitude, and little Ida," laughs Mignonette, as she tosses the now wide-awake infant in her arms. "For it is a darling,

and very soon you will, I hope, be strong enough, dear Madge, to make as good a nurse as I am."

As Mr. Ansdell had predicted, Margaret's recovery was slow and tedious. The great desideratum in her case—peace—was wanting, and of this fact no one could be more thoroughly aware than was the kind and skilful doctor who, now a man advanced in years, had known Colonel Effingham from his boyhood, and was, to a certain degree. conversant with the peculiarities which were latent not only in his constitution. but which exist also in that of every son and daughter of Adam. Of all the pyschological evils which can befall a human being, that of possessing a violent, or, as it is often wrongly called, an ungovernable temper, was, in this medico's opinion, the one most to be dreaded and deplored: he regarded it as among the proofs of an ill-balanced mind, or rather as suggestive of a brain which contained more of the elements that tend to promote insanity than fall to the average of poor human sensoriums.

"The duty of exercising the strictest control over an irritable and excitable temper is" (Mr. Ansdell, in one of his famous hospital lectures, said) "of paramount importance—an importance which can scarcely be exaggerated—a truth which must, the more especially be dwelt upon when to be 'passionate' is a family failing, or, to speak more plainly, when it is 'in the blood.' The inhabitants of savage countries—untutored men who know no law save their own will, who are neither restrained by religious principles, nor held in check by the usages of constitutional life—are, when Nature has cursed them with fierce passions, terribly apt to degenerate into madmen, and the same may be said of those who belong to our more favoured country. When the taint is in

the veins, when, that is to say, it is a family failing to be furious, it behoves every member of that family to mount guard, both for his own sake and that of others, over himself. To put a 'bit in his own mouth,' and a 'bridle between his lips'—the 'bit' of Principle and the 'bridle' of good manners—so that, habits of self-restraint being formed, that of yielding to violence, whether of word or deed, may be checked, and he, 'the man of wrath,' be saved from the terrible climax to which habitual indulgence in Passion too often leads our fellow-creatures, is a duty I would enforce on all."

It was his acquaintance with both Brian's weakness and his strength which caused Mr. Ansdell to think, with foreboding pity, of the weak and yielding woman, who truly was as a reed within a strong man's hands.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



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